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[TO KEITH'S INTENSE SURPRISE, SHE SAID, AS IF HE WERE AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, "I'M SO GLAD YOU'VE COME!"]

## POOR LADY BARBARA.

### CHAPTER I.

THERE was nothing remarkably picturesque or attractive about Barton. It is an eminently prosaic country town, thriving and prosperous, yet with no large manufactory, no special industry. Barton, in a word, was famous for nothing! It chanced to be the second largest town in Leamshire, and was looked up to vastly by the score or so of little villages which nestled round it in a ten miles' radius; but a visitor from Birmingham or Leeds, nay, even from Colchester or Yarmouth, would have thought very little of its importance, and voted it decidedly behind the times.

But Barton was quite satisfied with itself. It was very conservative, and so felt contented not to advance, so long as it did not go back. For a century it had supported two lawyers, three doctors, a bank and a police-station, besides two streets full of thriving shops. The number of the shops varied, that of

the men of law and medicine kept always stationary. Again and again, from time to time, an attempt had been made by an enterprising young surgeon, or a smart lawyer to infringe this custom, but there had always been the same result—failure.

Of the two lawyers practising in Barton, at the time of our story, one was a bachelor, the other a married man with fourteen children, and a wife whose friends always declared she had made his fortune, while her enemies (and she was just the woman to have enemies) retorted that had she brought him a million of money he would have paid a heavy price for it by marrying such a termagant.

John Norman never confided his private opinion on the success or failure of his marriage to any human creature. He was rather a favourite in Barton. He was a clever man, and the only wonder was he had been content to vegetate so long in a small country town.

Perhaps the truth was he could not afford to move. Fourteen children are not brought up for nothing, and, besides, if ever woman had the gift of making money fly, that

woman was certainly Matilda Norman née Ford.

The lawyer was not a native of Barton. Indeed, a great many people could remember his coming there, seven-and-twenty years before, in answer to an advertisement of old Mr. Ford's for a senior clerk.

John Norman was only five-and-twenty then, young, handsome, with an air of distinction the Barton ladies were not used to see at their tea-parties, and a halo of romance round him for two reasons. No one knew his history, and he wore deep mourning for the young wife who had given her life for her baby's.

It is not too much to say that any one of the eligible damsels in Barton would have accepted the post of consoler to Mr. Norman and mother to his little boy; but there seemed a peculiar fitness in the young widower's proposing to his employer's daughter.

Mr. Ford was well on in years, and quite willing to retire. He had always been regarded as a "warm" man, and Matilda was his only child. People said the clerk did



well for himself on the day when he married Miss Ford and went home with her to the lawyers' red brick house.

Well, that wedding was a quarter of a century old now, and there were thirteen "consequences" of it. Old Ford had long been gathered to his rest. It was found he had sunk all his savings in an annuity. So all Mattie's fortune consisted of the business.

However, as the practice was good, and her husband a sharp, clever man, things went well with them, and probably, but for the fourteen olive branches, and Mrs. Norman's unlimited love of spending, by this time they might have saved a handsome competency.

As it was, they had saved nothing, not a penny piece. It was whispered, too, that the business was falling off. Certainly John Norman had grown to stoop a good deal, and there was a troubled anxious look on his face. His wife was neither troubled nor anxious, but decidedly cross. Four of her daughters were "out," and no young man had come forward and asked her to be his mother-in-law. Then her demands for money were not complied with so readily as formerly, and the woman's narrow mind and sordid nature steeped openly to remind her husband that it was to her he owed everything.

He was a weak man, deplorably weak. He knew he was in the right, and yet he yielded to his wife because he could not stand her pitiless tongue. There was one inmate of the red brick house whom Mrs. Norman had hated from his infancy.

Keith had been little more than a year old at the time of her marriage, and ever since he could remember she had detested him. As a boy he had felt her cruelty little. Money had been more plentiful then, and seeing the petty slights heaped on his first-born, the lawyer had sent him early to school, where he was safe from his stepmother's tyranny.

A favourite, with all his playmates, it came about that most of his holidays were spent away from Barton. He was almost a stranger to the little country town, where at eighteen he took a desk in his father's office as articled clerk.

Keith loved his profession, and got on at it. Perhaps the having so few attractions in his home made him more devoted to his business duties. He had been a full-fledged solicitor for five years, and had only remained with his father because the lawyer himself had always given his son to understand he should one day succeed him—a partnership first, at John Norman's death the whole connection, that was what Keith regarded as a certainty.

Otherwise he would never have stayed a day after he was "admitted." Mrs. Norman made him far too uncomfortable at home for him to have any affection for his father's house.

Judge of his surprise and indignation when one June day Mr. Norman announced calmly that Bryan (his second son) having just passed his final examination would enter the office, and there not being room for three of the same family Keith had better look out for another opening as soon as practicable.

"I call it cruelly unjust!"

Keith at this time was nearly twenty-eight. He was tall and well-built; he had clearly-cut features, a thoughtful, intelligent expression, and large dark grey eyes.

It was a good face, and one to be trusted, even though just now it was full of anger and indignation. There was very little resemblance between Keith and his father, who looked—if such a thing could be true of the prosperous, self-satisfied lawyer—very much ashamed of himself.

And Keith had cause to be angry. He had known perfectly he could have demanded a far higher salary than the paltry two pounds a week which had been doled out to him for the last five years.

He had put up with it simply because of the

future partnership, and now that was to be Bryan's and not his!

"I can't afford to give you more," had been Mr. Norman's excuse at the time of his son's being admitted; "but you may as well stay with me, you will be gaining experience, and, of course, increasing the practice is all for your own good in the end."

And now the blow had come. After considerable hesitation and beating about the bush, Mr. Norman had suggested to Keith that he should seek another situation—had confessed that he intended Bryan to be his partner.

"Bryan, a boy of twenty-four—Bryan, who hates the sound of law, and was plucked twice for his last exam! I wish you joy of such a partner, sir; but I think I have been cruelly deceived. Do you fancy I should have wasted these last five years in a country office but for a belief I should soon have a share in the connection?"

"I can't help it," said Mr. Norman, wearily. "You're no idea how hard I'm pushed, Keith."

"Well, I think your conduct cruelly unjust," repeated Keith, firmly.

Mr. Norman sighed. He had an idea the town of Barton would entirely endorse the verdict.

"You've plenty of talent, Keith, you're safe to get on!"

"I am your first-born," said the young man, bitterly, "my interests should stand before Bryan's; but I understand pretty well whom I have to thank. This is Mrs. Norman's doing."

"I couldn't help it, Keith," replied John Norman, relieved, weak man that he was, to cast the blame on his wife. "You see, when I married her I was badly off."

"You had an honourable profession!"

"A profession which brought me a hundred and twenty pounds a year. Well, you know the rest!"

"Mrs. Norman takes care no one should fail to hear it. You came here as clerk to her father, married her, and succeeded to the business."

Mr. Norman looked on the ground. He never spoke a word against his wife. Never betrayed there were moments when he deemed his prosperity dearly purchased; but the slights and unkindness meted out to his first-born had been a bitter pain to him though he had never been brave enough to rise in Keith's defence.

The anger died slowly out of Keith's eyes. He looked almost pityingly on his father. It dawned on him even his own lot, despoiled of what he had grown to consider his birthright, was far less painful than that of the man who was tied for life to such a wife as Matilda Norman.

"I don't suppose it is your own doing, father; but you might have given me a hint."

"I wish now I had spoken sooner, but I never quite gave up the hope of managing Matilda. Then, you see, I knew that Bryan was so incorrigibly idle, and so hated law, that I always fancied he would either fail to pass the required exams or else refuse to enter my profession, then things would have been easily arranged."

Keith looked straight into his father's face.

"Of course, under the circumstances, you will waive the usual notice, sir. I shall leave Barton to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" Mr. Norman stood aghast. "Why, surely, you had better stay here till you meet with another situation."

"This is quarter day," said Keith, coolly.

"I have just received my salary, and I have saved a trifle, quite enough to keep me until something turns up. I could not break bread with Mrs. Norman again. I believe it would choke me. I must go back to-night for an hour to pack, and then I shall leave Oakdale for ever."

Keith!

"I can't help it, father, I'm not revenge-

ful; but this is the last drop in the torrent of persecution which has pursued me from childhood."

It was all true—perfectly true. John Norman could not deny one single word.

"It is a trying position for a woman to be a stepmother," he said, slowly.

"Not in this instance. I was only a year old when you married Mrs. Norman. If she had so willed it I need never have known I was her stepchild, since it seems my own mother left no hint or kin to claim an interest in her son."

It was the first time the dead wife had ever been mentioned between them. Keith knew actually nothing of his mother save that her life ended when his began.

Mr. Norman hesitated a moment, and then said, quietly,—

"You are mistaken there, Keith. Your mother left both parents, brothers and sisters to mourn her loss. She was far above me in rank, and they never forgave her marriage. It is a painful subject to me even now; but if we are to part, I owe it to you to tell you this much of your relations. They may be dead, the old people at least, but, probably, some of their descendants survive. I have never troubled to make inquiries or even to study the pedigree. When I lost your mother, my connection with Sandley Grange was at an end."

"And the name?"

"Your grandfather was Lord Muoro, of Sandley Grange. I married his youngest daughter, the Lady Diana Keith. She gave up name, title, home and family for me, but she never regretted it. For ten months we lived in an Eden of our own, then I was left to face the world alone."

"And you could put another in her place?"

"Keith, don't judge me harshly. I was poor, and a lonely life seemed unbearable to me. To be faithful to the dead is not in man's nature; and, you see, until her own children came I had no idea Matilda would not be a loving mother to you."

"And you have heard nothing all these years of Sandley Grange?"

"Not a word."

"Does she know—Mrs. Norman, I mean?"

"That you are an Earl's grandson?" replied John Norman, smiling. "She has not an idea of it. My darling dropped her title when she became my wife. It seemed so utterly unsuited to our poverty. I have never mentioned her birth to Matilda. Why, if I had, she would have dragged Lord Muoro's name into every other sentence, and tried to imagine he was the girl's ancestor."

"I see."

"You bear no malice, I hope, Keith?"

"The young man drew himself up.

"Not to you, father; but I think among you all I have been hardly dealt by."

"You are sure to fall on your feet."

Keith sighed.

"I expect I shall succeed. I believe I have it in me to carve out a name and fortune for myself; but I doubt if either will make amends to me for being cast forth like an alien from my father's house."

He shook hands with Mr. Norman and left the office. The elder man understood. He was going that afternoon to see a client at a distance, and would not return to Barton till the next morning. When he went back to Oakdale his first-born would have quitted it.

Keith went out into the High-street with fevered brow and aching heart. He had no definite plan of action, no fixed scheme for the future. The blow had fallen on him too suddenly. Only one step he had already settled in his mind, he would go to London.

It seemed to the young man that somewhere in the great vastness of the modern Babylon he must surely find not only fame and fortune—somehow he felt no anxiety about those—but friends and someone to care for him.

He did not turn his steps towards Oakdale,



somehow he would vainly avoid a meeting with his stepmother. If he waited till seven o'clock Mrs. Norman and her elder girls would have started for an evening party (Barton kept primitive hours), and he could make his modest preparations in their absence, and catch the evening train to London before they had left the fascinations of music and cards.

But to follow out this left him with four long hours on his hands. Usually, Keith's time never hung heavily. He would have turned into the library or found a hundred ways of spending his leisure pleasantly, but to-day he felt he could not seek his old haunts. He did not want to meet a single acquaintance, for if so, he must speak of his departure, and he knew that the news would provoke blame on his father's conduct. No, poor Keith longed but for one thing—solitude.

He walked on and on as one who does not know fatigue, until at last the streets, nay, even the prim suburbs of Barton were left behind and he found himself out in the open country, miles away from Oakdale, and with no house within sight. On one side of him a thick wood, on the other the beautiful grounds of Landale Park.

Though he had lived at Barton so long, he had never before been through Landale, though it was only seven miles off. There was, in fact, a very bitter feeling at Oakdale respecting the master of the Park.

Keith had never seen him, but he had heard the story from his father's point of view, and thought the lawyer had some right to feel aggrieved.

For fifty years or more the Fords had managed the Landale affairs. Three Baris had been old Mr. Ford's clients, and the present nobleman had always been on the best of terms with the old gentleman; but the day he took John Norman into partnership Lord Landale removed his patronage.

He did it with the utmost courtesy. Mr. Norman admitted that. He wrote a note saying that as he was starting for a long foreign tour, and might be absent from Leamshire for years, he thought it best to transfer the management of his estate to a London lawyer.

It was perfectly feasible that the Earl might find it more convenient in his flying visits to England to call on a legal adviser in the Temple than to consult with one at Barton, and probably, neither Mr. Ford nor his son-in-law would have felt injured had the change been made only during Lord Landale's absence.

But the Earl was away barely two years, and when he returned to Leamshire, not only did he still keep his affairs under London management, but he quietly avoided all intercourse with James Ford.

If he met the old gentleman in the street, he was as cordial as possible, and would carry him off, in spite of his protests, to lunch at the Park; but though kind and friendly when brought face to face with the old lawyer, Lord Landale never seemed to remember his existence when away from him, and to the old man's chagrin never included Mr. and Mrs. Norman in the "mixed" balls, which given once or twice a year at the Park did very much to make the noblesman popular.

John Norman declared Lord Landale's conduct was a personal slight to him, and wanted his father-in-law to demand an explanation, but the old man was too wise.

"Great folks have a right to their fancies, Jack," he said, simply. "Lord Landale was free to take his business out of our office, and I don't expect the loss of one client'll ruin us. Besides, every one knows he's gone to a London man, it's not as though he'd changed to Flint over the way. I'm not going to pick a quarrel with the Earl for your sake, so you and Mattie must just bury your grievances."

And they had to bury it; but it's a sting rankled. In time to come (Mr. Ford lay in his grave then), a fair young Countess came home to the Park, and Mrs. Norman, strongly

against her husband's advice, called upon the bride.

It was not presuming, unless you looked into the case minutely. The doctor's wives and the clergyman's sister, the mother of the rival lawyer, had all "left cards"; but considering the Normans believed Lord Landale had treated them rudely, it was a strange thing for them to seek the acquaintance of his wife and results proved it was a mistake, for though Lady Landale's ponies drove down Barton High-street, and she actually called on poor Mrs. Prettyman, who lived in the centre of the town, those long-tailed animals never stopped at Oakdale.

Keith was a boy at school, rarely coming home during the five years that Lady Landale, alone like a bright particular star in Leamshire. Then her husband took her abroad, and very soon the news came of her death. The Earl seemed inconsolable, and had never revisited the Park, though by this time gossip said his only child was of an age to make her debut in society, and take her proper place in the county.

Keith Norman had heard the story over and over again. Mrs. Norman was not at all above declaring that Lady Landale's death was a judgment on the Earl for his conduct in daring to employ a London lawyer. But it came back to him with new force as he leant heavily against a tree, and looking over the low fence, saw the beautiful grassy award, the grand old trees, which added to the charms of Landale. He knew quite well that for miles all was the possession of the Earl, Lord Landale was the largest land owner in Leamshire. His mansion, hidden from view by the lofty trees, dated from early Norman times. He had every advantage which birth could give or money purchase, and yet for more than thirteen years he had been a wanderer from home and country.

"My father says, 'to be faithful to the dead is not in man's nature,'" thought Keith bitterly. "He must have forgotten Lord Landale, I should fancy."

He had turned into the wood, and was walking along with the same fevered step and impatient spirit, when his solitude was suddenly interrupted; a turn of the winding, maze-like path brought him face to face with a young girl, who sat on the trunk of a fallen tree. Her shady garden hat had fallen off, and her bright, sunny-haired hair fell in loose waves over her forehead. Keith was quite certain he had never seen her before. He could not have forgotten that sweet, wistful face, those dark blue eyes. To his intense surprise, she turned to him as though he had been an old acquaintance.

"I am so glad you have come!"

Keith started; he really did not know what to say to this very friendly address from a stranger.

"I beg your pardon," and he bowed a little stiffly, for the young lawyer was not in the least a "ladies' man." "I am afraid there is some mistake. I don't think I have the pleasure of your acquaintance."

The young lady laughed as though much amused.

"I always heard that English people were very formal," she said, simply; "but I have lost my way, and sprained my foot besides. Surely you are not going to refuse to help me, because we don't happen to have been introduced?"

The merriment was infectious. Despite all he had gone through that day, Keith Norman could not repress a smile.

"I assure you I shall be proud to be of any use to you, but I am afraid you must be at some distance from home if you live at Barton or Nidale."

"I don't," returned the young lady, quickly. "I live at Landale, and it is close by."

"Landale! Do you mean the Park?"

"Of course I do!" retorted the girl. "I don't think there is any other house at Landale where I could live."

"You must have come a long way. The

lodge gates are quite a mile from even the beginning of this wood."

"I never went near the lodge gates. One end of the wood is quite close to the Park—to the house, I mean. I can get into it from the drawing-room window in five minutes. Of course, I came that way; and I don't believe I am more than a quarter of a mile from home, if only I knew which way to turn."

She looked at Keith as though she delivered the solution of the problem into his hands. That young man felt decidedly at a loss.

"You see," he remarked, slowly, "I never was here before. And, besides, I don't know Lord Landale. He might think I was trespassing if I suddenly appeared in his private grounds."

"Papa is not a tyrant," returned the young lady, decidedly. "Besides, I think he would rather welcome a perfect army of trespassers than that I should spend the night here, as I certainly shall, if you don't help me."

There was not the slightest spice of coquetry in her manner. Evidently she was accustomed to find willing servants in everyone she met; and this stranger's hesitation seemed to her most unaccountable.

"Will you stay here," asked Keith, gravely, "while I try and find the path? You are sure it is near here?"

"I am not sure of anything!" replied Lady Joan, "except that I had been out about ten minutes, when I sat down and fell asleep—it was so hot, I couldn't help it. Then, when I woke up, I suppose I took the wrong turning, for I walked and walked till I was quite tired, and yet I never seemed to get any farther. When I twisted my foot, I knew there was nothing for it but to sit down and wait till someone came."

Keith had no alternative but to start on his strange task.

From Lady Joan's speech he gathered that the wood extended in a kind of semicircle, and that one end of it must be in the Landale grounds.

The only thing he had to guide him was her assertion that she came out of the house by the drawing-room windows.

This room had been built new at the time of the Earl's marriage, and was one of the lions of the Park.

Keith knew it was at the extreme south of the mansion; therefore, by steering due south, he must in time come to the lost path.

He walked on quickly. He had almost forgotten his own troubles in the strangeness of the meeting that had befallen him.

He had not even heard of Lord Landale's return. He was probably the person in Leamshire whom it would least affect, and yet he had been chosen by fate to help Lady Joan out of her dilemma.

"No wonder the Earl mourns her mother if the Countess was like her daughter!" he thought, gravely, and then he found himself laughing a little bitterly as he reflected what golden visions Mrs. Norman would have indulged had only this adventure befallen her handsome Bryan.

A wood is about as perplexing to a stranger as the far-famed maze at Roehampton.

Keith took the precaution to mark his way by crossing the trees occasionally on either side with a piece of white chalk he found in his pocket.

He could hardly believe his eyes when, before he had been away from Lady Joan five minutes, an abrupt twist of the narrow path brought him in full face of the grand old home of the Landales.

And face to face with something else. A tall, stately-looking man, who had evidently just emerged from the house, looked up at the intruder with very natural surprise.

"Have you lost your way?" he asked, and in spite of his astonishment there was not the least hint of annoyance in his tone.

"No, Lord Landale," replied Keith, crossing the peer's identity as a matter of course. "I was walking in the woods, when I met your daughter, who asked me to find the nearest

way to her home. I represented to Lady Joan you might consider my search trespassing, but she seemed of opinion you would overlook that, as it was undertaken at her wish."

"You don't mean to say she has lost her way?" said her father, anxiously.

"The difficulties will soon be over now. I can take you to her in five minutes."

They started together, more like old friends than the acquaintance of a minute.

Keith wondered if the peer would have been quite so cordial if he had known his name.

They found Lady Joan in the same spot where Keith had left her. She welcomed Lord Landale with a smile.

"You were quite right, papa," she said, brightly. "You said I should lose my way, and you see I did. In fact, I should probably have spent the night in the woods if fate had not sent me a friend in need. I hope you have thanked this gentleman—I do not know his name. I told him mine, but he never volunteered his."

Lord Landale smiled on her with a tenderness which showed how dear she was to him; but, to Keith's surprise, there was a sadness in his expression. It really seemed as though this bright, winsome creature, so full of health and beauty, was regarded by her father with anxious eyes. Perhaps, the young man decided, if Lady Joan were like her mother, the Earl feared she, too, might die young; but the fear seemed utterly groundless. Never had he gazed on such a radiant picture of life and health as this fair daughter of the Disneys.

"I will tell it you, Joan," said her father, quietly. "Unless I am much mistaken, this is Mr. Keith Norman, the grandson of an old friend of mine."

Keith marvelled he should care to call Mr. Ford his "old friend," since he had so pointedly refused the acquaintance of the lawyer's family; but he hastened to correct the Earl's mistake.

"I beg your pardon, Lord Landale," he said, gravely, "but I am not Mr. Ford's grandson. I am only Mrs. Norman's step-son."

"Precisely. I thought I implied as much; you are the grandchild of my old friend Munro, of Stindley Grange. I should have known you anywhere for a Keith, you have all their features."

Four-and-twenty hours before Keith would have decided Lord Landale was growing mad, now he began to understand the peer might have known his mother, and that it was possibly for her sake he had fought shy of the man who had so speedily forgotten her.

"You must come home and dine with us," said Joan, prettily. "Do you know you are a sort of cousin of ours?"

"Surely not!"

"Joan is right," said her father, frankly. "The Keiths and the Disneys are related, though I confess the connection is too distant for me to define it exactly. You had better do as my daughter says, and dine with us, unless," and he looked hard at the young man, "Mrs. Norman has brought you up to regard me as a kind of hereditary foe."

"Mrs. Norman and I seldom think alike," said Keith, frankly. "She has never quite forgiven me for presuming to exist. For years I have been one too many in my father's house, and to day things have come to a crisis. Mrs. Norman's son is to have the partnership promised me from boyhood, and I am to go out into the world and make my fortune."

"The very best thing that could happen to you," was Lord Landale's brisk rejoinder; "and do you really mean that you have left Oakdale for good?"

"I am going back to pack up, that is why I was wandering here. Mrs. Norman is going out to spend the evening. I am waiting till she has left the house before I go there to put my things together. Perhaps it is a revengeful feeling, but I think that to break bread with her again would choke me."

Lord Landale smiled, as if he did not at all blame the sentiment.

"I shall change my invitation," he said, kindly. "It is past six now; I propose you go back to Oakdale (he was as careful as Keith not to say 'home') at once and pack up; but don't go to London to night, come and sleep at the Park. I am running up to town myself to-morrow, and I rather think I may be of some use to you. Anyway, one day's delay in beginning to make your fortune can't matter much."

Keith thanked him warmly. He had as little of the sycofant in him as most men. He would have been grateful at this moment for kindness from any true hearted man, but he would have been more than human had he not felt a thrill of gratification at the vexation in store for his step-mother, when she learned (things travelled very swiftly in Leamshire) the hated half-brother, whom she taught the children to look on as inferior to themselves, and had hounded from her house, had left it to become Lord Landale's guest.

The Earl's own carriage took Keith back to Barton. With feelings a little akin to those of John Gilpin's wife, he alighted a few yards before he reached Oakdale. He entered the house with very mingled feelings.

Little as had been the kindness meted out to him there, it was yet his father's house, the only home he had ever known, and a strange feeling of loneliness oppressed him as he went into his own room for the last time, and began his preparation for leaving it for ever.

The door opened presently and a young girl appeared. It was Mrs. Norman's fourth daughter, the only one of the children for whom Keith entertained any real love.

Her mother often declared Kathleen was no true Ford. Certainly she was a great contrast to her sisters, for while they seemed to have no hearts at all poor Katy had rather too much.

She was a gentle, obliging, sensitive little thing, whose warm, generous nature was always leading her into what her mother called "imprudence"—a child who cared for nothing in the world so much as love, and who from her birth had received but little of that.

She was not pretty at seventeen. Katy was at an awkward age. She looked—her mother said a dozen times a day—all legs and arms. Her complexion was sallow, and her great, dark eyes were almost too large for her thin, pinched face.

"Oh, Keith! Are you really going away?"

"Ah! Katy. You are just in time to be a good Samaritan and help me with my packing."

"But where are you going, Keith?"

"To London, to-morrow," not caring to tell her of his brief visit to Landale Park, lest the knowing of it should bring her into trouble with her mother.

"To London—for good, Keith?"

"Not for ill, I hope, child."

"But why?"

He softened the tale in telling it to her, for it was her own mother, her own brother, through whom he had suffered, and he could not bear to hurt her.

"You see, Katy, I must begin to make my fortune some day, or how shall I ever get that cottage where you are going to keep house for me and collect as many stray cats and dogs as ever you please?"

"But you will come back?" she pleaded.

"Wouldn't it be better if you can come to me, Katy?"

"But mamma?"

"Mrs. Norman has ten daughters, Katy, so I think she can spare me one," replied Keith, cheerfully; "but remember, child, the fortune may take a long time to make. You mustn't grow impatient."

"And you will write to me, Keith?"

"Of course; and you must send me plenty of long letters in return. The penny post will be a great comfort to us. Mind you tell me

all the news, and what grand husbands your mother finds for Alice and Bertha."

Bertha was twenty-five, Alice some years younger, Bryan came between them. Mrs. Norman was very proud of her two eldest girls, and expected them to make good matches, though at present no one had come forward to ask them to change their name.

Keith packed his last portmanteau, and himself carried the luggage downstairs, and sent a small boy he saw passing for a cab.

He meant to take his possessions to the station and then return with one small bag to where Lord Landale's brougham waited.

But he had made a mistake as to Mrs. Norman's absence. She had excused herself at the last moment on the plea of a headache, and just as all the luggage was in the cab and Kathleen was clinging to her half brother in a tearful last farewell, the drawing-room door opened and the mistress of the house came suddenly upon the scene.

"So Oakdale is to be free of you at last?" she said, tartly, to her step-son. "And I think it's high time. Few men of nearly thirty would stay at home living on their father."

Kathleen blushed crimson for very shame, but Keith made not the slightest answer. One would have said he did not even hear the taunt, but his very silence only exasperated the angry woman.

"You'd better go to your mother's people and give them a turn of supporting you. I'm sure my relations have done enough for my children. It's time your mother's did something for you. Perhaps, though, she hasn't got any. I daresay she was a foundling or something of that sort. I've been told Norman's first match was a very unequal marriage."

"It was, indeed," said Keith, looking her full in the face, while a grim little smile came round the corners of his mouth. "My mother's marriage was a most unequal one, but I believe it was happy."

Mrs. Norman felt puzzled at his manner, but he did not give her time to ask any questions.

With one last caress to the weeping Kathleen he sprang into the waiting cab, and in another moment the great gates of Oakdale closed behind him with their melancholy clang.

The first step in the strange journey had been taken. Little as he suspected it then, before a year had passed Keith knew his father's weakness, and Mrs. Norman's avarice had been but mere instruments in the hands of Fate.

There was work awaiting him he never dreamed of. A great wrong was crying out to be redressed, a cruel fraud lay ready to be discovered. In later years Keith learned to be thankful for the troubles of that June day, for he knew it was by them he was driven to the rescue.

(To be continued.)

## ROY'S INHERITANCE.

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### CHAPTER XXXVI.—(continued.)

"Jove! I thought you were never coming!" exclaimed Jack as a relief to his feelings. "Get in. I'm doing coachman to night, as it wouldn't do to trust Mathews too far."

"Oh! Jack, I'm so sorry to have kept you; but I couldn't get away before," her heart full of compunction, for she knew how cold he must be.

"All right, there's ten o'clock! We must go like blazes! It's rather rough driving. I hope it won't shake your nerves as much as your body," and with a laugh he gave the horses their heads, and they started at a sharp trot over the grass.

"Oh, Fairy Princess, promise to be kind to me to-night?" said Fred Sinclair, leaning forward eagerly.



"Have I ever been anything else?" with a laughing glance over the violets. Oh, how happy she felt as if she were driving to Paradise, and she must scream aloud with delight!

Would she have laughed if she could have seen the sinister glance which Philip Falconer cast after the retreating carriage, or known the curses which he was heaping on her gold brown head? He had brought her there to be his tool, and she had foiled him—she a child of seventeen or eighteen, she had foiled him, the experienced man of the world.

His anger was hot against her, as he crept back to his post in the library. Some day he would have his revenge, and proclaim to the four winds of heaven how this girl, who looked pure and innocent as any angel that ever wore white wings, slipped out at night to a secret assignation with a lover.

Yes, he would crush her in the hour of her triumph when all was going well with her, and her cup of joy was brimming over. Then the shadow should cross her path, the smile should vanish from her lips, and her proud little head should be lowered in the dust. He had been a fool not to suspect that her persistent refusal to listen to his love was due to something stronger than a girlish fancy for a man she had only seen for those few times in her life!

He had been out—not by Roy, the man whom women always raved about—but by an empty-headed boy, who was distinguished for nothing but his impudence. And, for the sake of this boy, Nora Macdonald had imperilled her chances of winning Mountfalcon! Oh, the crass stupidity of some people was perfectly beyond conception! Where she was going he could not imagine; but that she would come back he was certain, for even Sinclair, fool as he was, would not ask her to elope, if by so doing she would endanger her coming fortune.

Philip Falconer was not prone to forget or forgive, and he considered that he had a long score against the girl who had ruined his carefully laid plans. Prudence would keep him silent for a time, but pity would never stop his hand; and as he proceeded on his stealthy work with hammer and chisel he was determined to strike as soon as the hour came.

Very slowly and carefully he removed a picture from its place in the panelled wall. Behind the picture there was a flight of narrow stone steps which ran upwards to the Red Room on the next floor. This secret passage he had discovered accidentally some years before; but he had kept it a secret from everybody with his usual caution, in case it might be of some service to himself on a future occasion. He stepped back as a cloud of dust came into his face, and the long confined air spread a nasty odour through the room.

What was that? Only a rat behind the wainscot, but it made him start convulsively. He wondered why he felt nervous as a woman, he was not himself to-night, and he never had felt like this before; but it was only want of warmth not want of nerve!

The room was cold as a tomb, and he was chilled to the bone. He pulled a flask out of his pocket, and drained it to the dregs.

Long before he had closed the door, but to his excited fancy it seemed to open, and through it came his father leaning on the shoulder of Victor, and Victor's face was that of Roy's, the same straight nose, open brow, and truthful eyes, with the smile on the lips that could soften a heart of stone!

It was in that very room they had brought the young heir to die. They had laid him gently on that sofa, and he had turned his white face to his brother, and said, with his last breath,—

"Look after my boy for me!"

Philip shook himself angrily.

Why did all these wretched memories of a long-forgotten past come trooping back upon him to-night?

He had no choice but to go on. He was a ruined, desperate outlaw, and every door in England would soon be closed against him. His only chance was to go away to some other country and start afresh.

He had been proclaimed a defaulter by the Jockey Club, and, therefore, could not show his face on any racecourse, or even in his club.

Clearly there was no place left for him in the old country, and in order to start for a new one he must provide himself with funds—ergo, he was not committing a theft in helping himself to some of his father's hoarded treasure, but only obeying the laws of necessity.

That girl had called him a thief, and he hated her for it.

With a dark frown on his narrow forehead he began slowly to ascend the steep stairs, though a terrible foreboding urged him to go back; but he was reckless now, for his mood had changed, and he was in that state of mind when Heaven usually leaves a man to himself, and the devil takes possession of him immediately as his own property.

"I'm sorry we are late!" said Fred Sinclair, as Jack steered the waggone through the wide open gates of the Chase, "because Lady Clavering made such a point of chaperoning you herself."

"I couldn't help it! indeed I couldn't!" Nora asseverated earnestly.

"Oh, I don't suppose it will signify; only," hesitating a little, for he was just as anxious that Nora should do nothing wrong as if she had been his sister—and yet nothing was further from his wishes than to make her uncomfortable, "perhaps I had better go in first and tell Lady Clavering—and then she could come out and take you in."

"But that would be giving so much trouble!"

"As if you weren't worth it!" fervently.

After the silence and gloom of Mountfalcon Nora felt literally dazzled and bewildered by the blaze of light, the strains of music, and the sound of numberless voices, as she stood by Jack's side in the midst of a gaily dressed throng, and felt exceedingly small and uncomfortable.

Then the throng parted, and Lady Clavering, resplendent in ruby velvet and diamonds, came towards her, and greeting her with affectionate delight, kissed her warmly on both cheeks. Jack was commended for having obeyed her commands, and Nora was led into the ball-room by her hostess.

"Now, you stand close by me, and after a few minutes, I shall have no end of things to ask you, but I must speak to these people first," said Lady Clavering with a beaming smile; but Fred Sinclair had no idea of waiting for anything when the band up in the gallery was playing his favourite waltz, and the partner of his choice was standing disengaged by his side.

The next moment his arm was round her supple waist, and, to his inexpressible delight, he whirled her off into the giddy crowd before anyone else had a chance of pouncing on her. It was well for him that he recognised his opportunity and seized it, for Nora Macdonald was the belle of the evening, and as her story, with several romantic additions, was whispered behind fans, or breathed over bouquets of exotics, she became invested with an amount of thrilling interest that was heightened to an extraordinary degree by her beauty.

The Duchess of Honiton stared at her in haughty surprise. The Duke shook hands with her warmly, said he was awfully pleased to see her, and insisted on having a lancet; the men came up in crowds to ask for an introduction. But what did she care for the homage of a whole ball-room, if the one she was waiting for never appeared? Though she looked like the incarnation of youth and happiness, a dull sense of disappointment was weighing down her heart.

She gave a little cry as the bouquet of violets was dashed out of her hand by a passing couple, and kicked by one foot after another as if it had been a football. A tall man darted forward to rescue it from its ignoble fate, and as he turned to find out its owner, she found herself face to face with Roy Falconer! Oh the spasm of joy that shot through heart and brain as she realised that her chance had come, and she must not lose it!

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

For one instant Captain Falconer stood stock still, his blue eyes opened wide; the next he recovered himself, bowed low, placed the violets in the outstretched hand, and said,—

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Macdonald!"

The formal tone fell on her passionate heart like ice on heated iron. But she fought hard to show no outward sign of her emotion, and her pride coming to her rescue, she said, quietly,—

"Lady Clavering insisted, and Jack brought me."

"I wonder that my uncle allowed it!" he exclaimed, with raised eyebrows, as his eyes rested in unwilling admiration on the lovely, eager, upturned face with the lips of a seraph, and the eyes of a Hebe, and the sun-bright curls which crowned the dainty head like the halo of a saint.

"His consent was not asked," she answered quickly, and then bent forward, with the desperate resolve to ask him to come with her to some quiet corner, where she could tell him what she was dying to say.

But Fred Sinclair hurried up eagerly.

"This is our dance, Miss Macdonald."

And at the same time the Duke of Honiton laid his hand on the hussar's arm, and said, with a good-natured laugh,—

"Hallo! Falconer. My wife's waiting for you. You asked her to keep this dance, you know," and, to Nora's dismay, the two walked off together.

Would it go on like this till the end of the evening? Would she have to go home with her chance thrown away, and all the words she had rehearsed so carefully left unsaid?

Oh! if she were only a man, that she might run after him, and insist upon being heard!

Fred divided his attentions between Lady Alice Hawkshaw, who looked charming in a beautiful dress of pale pink, and the "Fairy princess;" but his susceptible heart was laid at the feet of the latter.

Of course, the admiration which was lavished on her fair young head only encouraged and increased his infatuation, for men are apt to follow each other like sheep through a hedge, and he was only waiting for a favourable opportunity to tell her that he could not possibly live without her.

She was very silent now; and her lovely eyes had a wistful look in them as if something were wanting to her happiness. But the galop was inspiring, and faster and faster went the flying feet; and pulses quickened, and hearts beat high, and the young felt intoxicated with youth and excitement, and the middle aged felt young again, and the old looked on with a smile of sympathy.

Again and again Fred Sinclair looked down into the sweet face, and feared, with the quick intuition of love, that something was amiss.

"You are tired to death, that's it," he exclaimed, as if he had just solved a riddle. "Come into the conservatory; it will be quiet now, and we shall have it all to ourselves."

Nora acquiesced, and they were soon seated in a little nook behind a screen of palm-plants and camellias.

On the way they had passed Jack flirting desperately with a girl at least ten years older than himself, and Lady Alice, who seemed to be snubbing the too demonstrative attentions of a good-looking Guardsman, and looked up

as they passed with rather a weary look in her soft brown eyes.

"At last I have you to myself!" Fred exclaimed, with great fervour, though his voice was lowered almost to a whisper. "Somebody else has always been getting in my way to-night, and it hasn't been at all like our talks in the woods. When may I have another?"

"Oh! next time you must come like an ordinary visitor to the front door," she said, with a sigh. "I am free now, and the year of probation is over."

"I won't be like an ordinary visitor. I've never been like that, and I can't go back to it now," he said, angrily.

"It won't make any difference," smiling at his evident vexation.

"But it will!" hotly. "Nora, darling, can't you see that I love you more than anything else on earth?" leaning forward, and trying to seize her hand.

"Hush, Mr. Sinclair!"

"Mr. Sinclair!" in fierce contempt. "Is this to warn me off?"

"No, no. How can you?" in genuine distress. "Oh! you've been so good to me—don't spoil it now!"

"I've been good to myself, that's all," gloomily. "Just say that you'll try and care for me some day," his good-looking face rained pleadingly. "I'd wait like a second Jacob."

"No; it would be no good," in a choked voice.

"But you don't hate me, and I'd try to deserve you—indeed, I give you my word I'd go to church twice on a Sunday—and I'd never play higher than I could help."

She shook her head.

"Then you won't have me at any price?" a fathomless sigh, and a deep silence. Poor Fred was so occupied with his own misery, that he took no heed of a conversation which filled up the gap left by his silent tongue—but Nora's attention was roused in a moment by the first words which came from behind the screen of plants.

"So you are really off, Roy?" in the Duchess's clear voice. "Driven into exile by that mercenary little sneak?"

"That's rather an odd way of putting it, when I am going to India, entirely to please myself," in a half-amused tone which made Nora's heart swell with indignant rage.

"You won't take me in by that sort of thing. If it hadn't been for the vilest conspiracy ever concocted by a girl and a man you would have been reinstated in all your rights, as soon as Lord Mountfalcon quarrelled with your uncle. Nora Macdonald has stolen your property, and she's no better in my eyes than the second—!" the Duchess never completed her sentence, for Sinclair, suddenly alive to what was going on, sprang to his feet with an indignant exclamation. Nora made him a sign to stay where he was, and stepped quietly in front of the plants which had concealed her from view.

Roy looked up in dismay, for he could see by her poor little white face and heaving chest that she had overheard everything, whilst the Duchess, believing that she had said nothing but what was true—was glad that "the little sneak" knew what was thought of her.

"May I speak to you, for a few minutes?" said Nora, trying desperately to steady her voice.

Roy bowed, drew her hand within his arm, and marched her off, wishing the Duchess at the bottom of the sea, and pitying the poor little girl who had got it "so hot and heavy," from the very depths of his generous heart.

Marion's triumph was dashed by a feeling of offence at Captain Falconer's unceremonious departure, and Fred Sinclair, who pounced upon her with the fury of an indignant though discarded lover, did not improve her temper. He left her in a state of breathless indignation, and very much astonished to think he dared to find fault with her Grace the Duchess of Honiton! He was a silly boy, she reflected, utterly infatuated by a pair of violet eyes.

She had sent him to Mountfalcon to tempt Nora Macdonald to break the conditions imposed on her by the Viscount; and lo and behold, he had gone over to the enemy's side, and now had the audacity to stand forward as the girl's champion. Even Honiton, her dear old foolish husband, maintained that there could be no harm in the girl as she had an angel's face, and Roy, the very man whom she had injured, could not bear to hear a word said against her, without biting his moustaches as if he would gnaw them off, and making his blue eyes flash like fire; and last not least in point of aggravation, there was her own charming sister Alice breaking her foolish young heart for a boy, who cared for nothing and nobody but this wretched little girl who had bewitched them all!

Meanwhile Roy Falconer led Nora to the Countess's own boudoir—a fascinating, most luxuriously fitted den, to which he and a few other privileged old friends had the exclusive entrée. He placed her in an arm-chair near the fire, and stood before her deferentially waiting for this bewitching, but most provoking, little damsel to tell him what she wanted.

"I—I don't know how to say it," she began, her breast heaving, her eyes full of passion and pain. "But surely you know why I went to Mountfalcon?" looking up into his grave face appealingly.

"No, I don't. It has always puzzled me," with a frank smile. "I suppose you thought the old man was desolate, and then," passing his hand across his forehead, "I fancy my uncle got hold of you."

"Your uncle!" she flashed back at him as quick as lightning. "The thief! the murderer! the man who makes me shudder if he comes near me! Oh, how could you be so cruel as to think I would marry him?"

"Then it isn't true?" looking down into her lovely face with eager eyes.

"I would rather ten thousand times be in my grave!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" he muttered under his moustaches. "But tell me: if you hated him why did you go? We were all against it."

"Don't you remember that first evening I ever met you here?" a soft pink stealing into her cheeks. "You told me that your grandfather had disinherited you."

"Yes; I remember."

"Ever since then I've longed, and hoped, and prayed to get it back for you. It was for you I went to Mountfalcon—you alone. For you I gave up my friends, and made Jack angry; for you I bore with the dullness, the dissipation, the utter misery of loneliness—and then—and then," bursting into tears, "you hate me, and call me a sneak!"

She rose as she spoke, and buried her face on the mantelpiece, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Nora! Good Heaven! how blind I've been! You did all this for me? Why then's not one of my dearest friends would do half as much, and you were almost a stranger!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

Then he put his arm round the small trembling form, and drew it closer and closer to his side.

"My darling! What have I done to deserve this?"

"You were so kind to me once!" wiping her eyes with a crumpled pocket handkerchief, "and I never forgot it."

"Kind? I never had the chance. I've been a brute to you always, and you never will forgive me!" his heart full of the tenderest compunction, his eyes glowing with passionate love.

"I forgive everything!" she said, with a little gasp of joy, "if you'll promise to take it back."

"Take what back, darling?" his golden moustaches just touching the soft curls on her forehead.

"Take everything that ought to belong to

you—Mountfalcon, and all the money, and everything!" quivering with such intense eagerness, as if life itself depended on his answer.

He shook his head, and gave a short laugh.

"And you—what would become of you?" "Oh! I should go back to Myrtle Lodge, and be so perfectly happy! Promise?" her sweet face upturned to his with the most innocent, involuntary temptation in eyes and lips.

"No, dear," very gravely; "I couldn't do it, even to please you. Oh, Heaven! if I weren't so poor!" thinking how eagerly he would have claimed her for his wife if she had been a poverty-stricken little girl, and he heir to Mountfalcon.

"But that's the very reason," stepping back and looking at him with frightened eyes. "You couldn't refuse me!"

"I couldn't do anything else."

"Then, let me tell you, you shall have it whether you like it or not," her head drawn up, her clear tones resolute and very decided.

"To-morrow morning I shall tell Lord Mountfalcon how I slipped out of his house to-night to come here. He will be fearfully angry, I'm quite sure, and then I shall go quietly back to Myrtle Lodge, and let him leave his money to Venables and Grimmer if he chooses."

"You mustn't do anything of the kind," very anxiously. "You must creep in like a mouse, and never let him know that you've left the house."

"I shall make a great noise, on the contrary, and pack up my trunks to-morrow," teasing her head defiantly.

He came close up to her.

"You won't leave the old man alone, with not a soul to care for him?"

"I can't help that," with a shrug of her snow-white shoulders.

"Yes, you can. You've the kindest little heart in the world, and you could never rest in comfort anywhere if you thought you had deserted him."

"He's no relation at all," pouting.

"Yet you've been like a daughter to him; and I should be miserable if I knew you had left him. Listen, dear. Let us wait till the old man is dead before we quarrel over his property. Be the sunshine of his life for a few months! He can't last much longer, and I shall bless you for it till the last day of my life!"

"But you'll take it back, if I ever get it?" returning to her first proposition, with intense earnestness.

"I'd rather be owner of Mountfalcon than of any other place in England," he answered evasively; "but we must let the future take care of itself."

"I trust to your honour, remember!" she said, gravely. "And now let us go back to the drawing-room," she added hastily, for there was something in his eyes which made her heart gallop, and her cheeks flush like the dawn.

"I'm going into exile, and we may never meet again," he said, softly. "Let me say good-bye to my little friend here."

She held out her hand without a word, for there was a great big lump in her throat, and a tremble about the pitteous mouth.

He drew her gently to him, and held her close to his panting heart. Oh! if he only dared to snuggle to share his poverty with him, and let Mountfalcon take its chance. But no; that would be taking an unfair advantage of a girl's generosity; the price was not for him, it must be left to be picked by another.

With a sigh of intense longing he stooped his golden head, and pressed a passionate kiss for the second time in his life on her pure fresh lips. "Was it the last?" he asked himself with a groan, as she shrank back, blushing to the tips of her fingers.

(To be continued.)



## ONLY A MATCH-MAKER.

—101—

HANS KREMEBERG stood before his easel, talking energetically, pausing every now and then in his painting to turn to his friend, Jack Army, who sat thrown back in the most comfortable of comfortable chairs, his cigar in his hand, watching the artist with a lazily-amused smile.

"I will acknowledge," Hans was saying, "that women of the present day are fascinating and amusing to meet in society; but when it comes to something rather nearer and dearer than a agreeable acquaintance, they are failures. Look at your so-called 'society-girls': you will not deny that, under their superficial coat of good breeding, they are, as a class, vain, artificial, mercenary, and heartless."

"My dear fellow," Jack interrupted abruptly, "I really must present you to Mrs. Ericson; for, although she is a society woman, you will find her a kindred spirit. Last evening she was telling me how disappointed Mrs. Donaldson was in the way her daughter Lily had turned out. She gave me a long list of poor Miss Lily's various shortcomings, and finished by saying in an awe-stricken whisper, as the climax of all that was horrible: 'And then, you know, Mr. Army, she is literary.'"

Hans half laughed. "I have met Mrs. Ericson. She strikes me as being rather a conventional, narrow-minded woman."

Two or three weeks after this conversation, the two friends went to West Waring, to be gone a fortnight.

The first Sunday morning they were at church, that everyone who has been to West Waring knows so well. The clergyman's low musical voice and the subdued flutter of fans were the only sounds that disturbed the Sunday quiet. Jack, sitting there—thinking, perhaps more of his fiancée far away than of the long and rather stupid sermon—felt lazily contented. It was a warm day, but the soft air was stirring and came freshly in at the open window, blowing gently to and fro the hair of the young girl who sat there.

"By Jove, what a pretty girl!" Jack almost exclaimed, when he first noticed her. She looked as if she had stepped out of an old picture, with her short-waisted white mull and her poke-bonnet. And then her face! It was exquisite, with that youth and freshness that are so attractive, not only to men, but to women whose youth and freshness are gone.

"Just Kremelberg's style," thought Jack. "I must make him look." Whereupon the latter was apishly poked and punched until he looked at her, and then he looked again, and kept on looking.

Church was over. The fair unknown, escorted by a good-looking elderly man, turned her steps towards a large hotel, while Hans and Jack joined the two Misses Bradford, whose greatest attraction to them, at least, was the fact that they were staying at the same hotel to Warrens.

When the two men were alone, Jack announced triumphantly that he had discovered who the pretty little girl at church was. Miss Bradford knew her mother well, and was going to take him to their hotel to talk that evening. She was a Londoner, and—

"What is her name?" Hans asked.

"That is the best of all!" Jack answered. "It suits her so exactly: it is 'Gretchen'—Gretchen Mayer." Doesn't she look like a Gretchen?"

That evening Hans had an engagement to go out rowing with Miss Livingstone—a London girl and a great belle.

How the days chase each other, at West Waring! The last evening had come, and the two men were absorbed in the cheerful occupation of packing. Jack was through first, and sat enjoying Hans' agony, as the latter, with the patience of despair, tried to induce an enormous sketch-book to fit into an absurdly small place.

"I should think, from your expression, it was a Chinese puzzle at least," he said. "Here, give it to me. I can stuff it in here," and Jack seized it and began indifferently to turn over the leaves and comment on the different sketches.

Suddenly his face changed, and he uttered an exclamation of admiration.

"By Jove!" he said, "this is exquisite. You must work it up, Hans. It will be the best thing you ever did!"

It was little Gretchen's young, sweet face, looking out from the shadow of a quaint, old-fashioned bonnet, her eyes intent and earnest, her lips parted as if she were about to speak.

"It is Gretchen Mayer's face," said Jack, slowly, as he still studied the sketch. "But it is Gretchen Mayer idealized. It has such a depth and earnestness. Why, Hans," he exclaimed, suddenly, "this might be your much-talked-of ideal girl!"

"And so she is!" cried Hans, emerging from the depths of his trunk, and looking rather red and uncomfortable.

Two or three weeks after the two friends had left West Waring, Miss Gretchen made her appearance in town; and Hans was so continually at Mrs. Ericson's that Jack saw much less of him than usual. One day, they met accidentally at the florist's, where Hans was wasting his substance on a large bouquet of buds. "For Miss Mayer. She goes back to-morrow," he said.

"Well?" asked Jack, gravely.

"Everything is over between us, if that is what you mean," answered Hans, with an apparently irrepressible short queer laugh.

Jack stared for a second in astonishment.

"Then I shall see more of you than I have lately," he said, quietly.

The rest of the evening Jack sat looking at his friend over his cigar, with the calculating eyes of an old match-maker.

Now, if ever, he felt, was the time for some girl to lay siege to his friend's unsusceptible heart; for the ideal girl, who had so long stood in the way of anything serious, was now effectually disposed of. How could Hans fail to find a bright agreeable girl interesting, after that charming little bore, Miss Gretchen? Why should not that interest deepen into something more? Why, in fact, had not the time come for his friend to do what he ought to have done before—fell desperately in love with and marry some charming girl?

The upshot of all this serious reflection was an heroic resolve.

"I will make a sacrifice on the altar of friendship," he thought. "I will—yes, I will—become, for the time being, a match-making and manoeuvring old mamma."

And, in his new character, he looked at Hans, with such an absolutely maternal beam, that Hans felt vaguely uncomfortable.

"Of what are you thinking, Jack?" he asked, uneasily.

"Yes, I shall marry you off immediately," Jack was thinking. But he discreetly said nothing. Already, in his mind's eye, he saw a graceful, girlish figure moving around the studio—a girl with a spirited, fascinating face, a small, well-set head, and a voice that thrilled you when she spoke, and that you longed to hear again when she was silent. Possibly, Sallie Wainright's voice was her greatest charm.

"Hans has always admired her," Jack continued, meditating. "Only that confounded ideal has prevented his falling in love with her. Everything is in my favour."

Yes, all the circumstances were in his favour, apparently. It all seemed very plain sailing; yet match-making is essentially a feminine talent, and Jack felt very masculine and stupid as he sat there—a very Judas, plotting the plan of battle in front of his victim's fire, smoking his victim's cigars. Should he arrange everything, or trust to the inspiration of the moment?

"What are you going to do to-morrow evening?" Hans broke in. "What do you say to going to see Miss Wainright?"

Jack started guiltily. There was a moment's pause; then Jack, with inspiration number one, said, awkwardly,—

"To tell the truth, Hans, I was going to see Miss Wainright myself to-morrow evening; and— Well, I had an especial reason for hoping to find her alone. But, if—"

"Oh, any other evening will do as well, for me; it is some time since I have seen her, that is all." And once more silence reigned.

"That first inspiration was certainly a success," Jack meditated, on his way home. "How disappointed and how puzzled the old fellow looked when I answered him! It will make him think of her, at all events."

Men invariably long for what they cannot have, and Hans felt now as if the only thing that would make life pleasant or even endurable was a call on Miss Wainright.

The next evening, when Jack was shown into Miss Wainright's parlour, he almost repented his first move.

She was alone, and looking unusually pretty. It was only for a minute, however; for, after she had shaken hands with him, she said, with her pretty little laugh,—

"Do you know, you have forgotten to say good-evening to Tatters?"

Tatters! His friend's *bête noir*! He had forgotten the dog's very existence.

Hans went to see Miss Wainright now very often, and at first with Jack, later alone.

"How much pleasanter the house is without that nuisance of a dog of hers," he said to Jack one day, for Miss Wainright's dog had mysteriously disappeared. No one knew anything about it; he had simply vanished. A little later, however, Hans' opinion about the dog seemed to change. "Do you know, Jack," he said, "Miss Sallie still misses that wretched little dog of hers. She must have a great deal of heart to care so much about him. I wanted to get her another, but she wouldn't let me. I wish she could have the brute back again."

"I wish to heaven she could!" Jack ejaculated, with such unexpected earnestness that Hans looked at him in astonishment.

Well, the fates smiled upon Miss Wainright and Hans. They were in love; they were engaged; the wedding-day was appointed.

Two or three days before the wedding an anonymous present arrived that puzzled Miss Wainright immensely.

Mrs. Hans Kremelberg says that to this day she cannot understand it. At first she thought Hans might have something to do with it; but no, he was perfectly innocent and as much puzzled as she and Jack seemed to be.

It was Tatters! Tatters, thinner, but in splendid condition. His long hair, of which apparently there had been taken the best of care, was like spun silk, so soft and fine! On his collar was a pale-blue bow even more astounding than the one which he had worn at the time of his "mysterious disappearance." The collar itself was new, the most fascinating collar of worked silver studded with turquoise.

Tatters seemed a reformed little dog.

"If he could only speak and tell us all his adventures!" said his happy mistress, as she patted him.

Whereupon Jack was heard to murmur indistinctly something which sounded amazingly like "Thank heaven, he can't!"

At the wedding, Jack was, so to speak, the presiding genius; but no one strutted around with as much importance or seemed to feel the solemnity of the occasion more than Tatters.

EVERY word we speak is the modal of a dead thought or feeling, struck in the die of some human experience, worn smooth by innumerable contacts, and always transferred warm from one to another. By words we share the common consciousness of the race, which has shaped itself in these symbols.

## MAKING RAIN.

—o—

Look upon the picture—  
Here's a pretty scene:  
Little Master Mischief,  
Little Miss Mutine!

Parents being absent,  
Governess away,  
Find a chance for frolic,  
Plan a place for play.

Grandpa's new umbrella,  
Stolen from the stand—  
Spread, should serve as bower  
For a princess grand.

"You shall be the princess  
Sitting there inside;  
I, a noble lover,"  
Master Mischief cried.

"Now I'll be the sun, that  
Shines amidst the leaves;  
Or the cool rain, tinkling,  
Dripping from the eaves—

Thus." From crystal bottle,  
Grasped and held on high,  
Pours a rushing torrent  
From a mimic sky.

O'er the head of her who  
Pride with terror blent,  
Sits secure and snugly  
Underneath her tent;

Whilst, with scattered ringlets,  
Rumpled crinoline,  
Dolly lies neglected,  
Tumbled in the wet—

Neither of the colprits  
Who enjoy the fun  
Thinkink of the whipping  
Due when all is done.

W. D.

## CINDERELLA'S MARRIAGE.

—o—

## CHAPTER XIX.

## BAD NEWS.

BERTIE did not come home that night, indeed it was late in the afternoon of the next day before he appeared. Lucinda, who was watching, saw him drive up, and, as he alighted, she noticed that he was lame with his left foot, the one whose ankle had been sprained a few weeks ago.

When she went down she found him in the morning room, taking off his gloves, and she knew from the gloomy expression of his face that his journey had not been a successful one.

"Well!" he said, standing with his back to the mantelpiece, and laughing rather forcedly, "I have no good news for you, Cinderella. You must prepare yourself for the worst."

"There can be no 'worst' for me, so long as you are well, and with me," she responded softly, all her jealousy vanishing in the magic of his presence. She went to his side, and slipped her hand in his, while her clear, grey eyes were lifted to his face. "Tell me your news, Bertie."

"That's right, be brave, Cinderella! I always did admire plucky women. What shall you say when I tell you that the lawyer who had the management of my affairs, and to whom I entrusted all my money to invest, has levanted, gone clean away, and taken my securities with him?"

She knitted her delicate brows slightly, and seemed puzzled. She knew very little of business matters, and she did not quite realise all Bertie's communication included.

"I'll put it plainer," he continued, dropping

his half jesting tone, and growing serious. "The truth is, Lucinda, I am a beggar. I haven't a half penny, save my pay, with which to bless myself!"

"Oh, Bertie!"

There was genuine horror in her tone, and she drew back a little with a perfectly unconscious movement of utter surprise. To her, Carbonnell had always been the embodiment of wealth itself. Had he not paid for her schooling, bought her presents, supplied her with pocket-money?

It is true, he had lately intimated to her that he was not rich, but she accepted this with a reservation, for what he would call poverty, she might estimate as riches.

But when he said, "I haven't a half-penny to bless myself with!" there was no getting round the bare fact, and she was undeniably shocked.

There are some men with whom it seems impossible to connect poverty, and Carbonnell was one.

To him, fine linen, glossy broadcloth and unlimited pocket-money seemed necessities, as requisite as the air he breathed. His wife found it impossible to picture him without these accessories.

For herself she cared nothing. She knew what poverty was, had borne it in the past, and could bear it in the future; but for him, oh, the idea was dreadful!

"After all, you don't seem to be bearing up so very bravely," he said, with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "No doubt we shall manage to rub along somehow—"

"I was not thinking of that!" she interrupted him, with a quick, little gesture. "But are you sure that nothing can be saved?"

"I'm afraid not. You see this man—O'borne his name is—has been my solicitor for some years, and having the most perfect confidence in him, I let him manage my affairs entirely. Acting on his advice, I realised some property I had, and gave the proceeds to him to invest on mortgage, as he told me that would bring me in a higher rate of interest; but it seems that the scoundrel instead of investing the money paid it in to his own banking account, and the interest that I have received since he himself has paid out of his own pocket. Do you understand?"

She nodded comprehensively.

"Well, yesterday I received a telegram from a man I know in the City, and in it he told me that O'borne had left the country, and had taken with him every farthing he could lay hands on. I did not tell you at the time, because I was hoping matters would not be quite so bad as they were represented,—the hope was fallacious," Bertie added, gloomily, as he walked towards a side table, and poured himself out a glass of sherry.

"How lame you are!" she exclaimed, again noticing that he halted in his walk.

"Yes, I twisted my foot getting out of the train. By the way," he added, hastily, as footsteps were heard approaching, "don't say anything about my position yet. Bad as it is, I have one chance that it may be partially retrieved, and, if Aunt Drusilla heard of my losses, she would attribute them to carelessness or something of that kind. She never had a very high opinion of my business capacities. We'll wait a day or two before we take the world into our confidence, and in the meantime perhaps something may turn up."

The footsteps were those of Lady Christabel, who, when she came in, ran to Bertie with both hands outstretched.

"Oh, Bertie, I am so glad you are back! These last twenty-four hours have been interminable; the house has been as dull as ditch-water since you went away."

Bertie was conscious of a slight revulsion of feeling at this enthusiastic greeting, which he could not feel flattered by, as its bad taste was obvious. Christabel's marked ignoring of his wife struck him too, and his tone was not specially warm when he responded,

"It is very good of you to say so, Chris-

tabel. I am afraid, however, I have come back in such an execrable temper that you will soon wish I had stayed away. Cinderella, I wish you would order me some strong coffee, I feel as if it might do me good."

Lucinda rang the bell, and Lady Christabel sat down at the piano, and struck a few low chords.

"Let me play to you, Bertie, it will soothe you. It always did in the old days, you know."

Carbonnell made no reply—and, indeed, to reply would have been difficult under the circumstances.

He flung himself on the couch and Lucinda with a true wifely instinct went upstairs to his dressing-room to fetch the slippers of her lord and master.

As she passed Miss Carbonnell's door the old lady called her in, and kept her talking for nearly ten minutes, and on returning to the morning room she found that Lady Christabel had left the piano, and seated herself at a small table, which was drawn up close to the head of Bertie's couch, and on which the coffee was placed. Christabel had just poured out a cup and handed it to the officer, who looked up rather shamefacedly as his wife entered.

"My cousin has been kind enough to take your place, Cinderella," he observed, in a semi-apologetic tone, at which Christabel flashed angrily.

Lucinda, without making any comment, seated herself at the window, and took up a shawl she was knitting for Miss Carbonnell, and presently Christabel began a conversation with Bertie in too low a voice to reach any ears save his.

It was interrupted by the young man himself, who, as he altered his position, gave vent to a quick exclamation of distress.

"It is my foot," he said. "It pains me dreadfully. I fancy there must be a bone broken, for the ankle is very much swollen and inflamed."

"Let me send for the doctor," exclaimed his cousin. "One ought never to neglect a thing of this sort. When did you feel it first?"

"Yesterday, as I got out of the train at Waterloo, and I have been walking about on it a good deal since, which has, no doubt, made it considerably worse. Still it seems absurd to send for a doctor for such a small matter."

"Nonsense!" said Christabel, rising as she spoke. "I will tell one of the servants to ride off and fetch Doctor Thwaites without delay—or better still, I will write a note."

She was moving to the writing-table, when a sudden, and unexpected interruption stayed her steps. Lucinda stood before her, very pale and quiet, but with a resolute look in her grey eyes.

"Excuse me, Lady Christabel, but if my husband wishes a doctor sent for I will write the note to tell him to come!"

If the ground had opened, and a chasm yawned at her feet, Lady Christabel could not have been more utterly surprised. She eyed the daring speaker scornfully from head to foot, but Lucinda met her glance without quailing, and held herself with such calm dignity that the Earl's daughter was abashed and involuntarily lowered her gaze.

She said nothing, and Lucinda went quietly on to the writing-table, and wrote the note; then she rang the bell and gave it to the servant who answered her summons.

All this was done with such perfect ease and in such a matter-of-fact manner, that it admitted of no question, and only those who had seen the faces of the two women as they stood before each other would have guessed how much was involved in this simple incident.

Bertie had watched it attentively. He said nothing, but he recognised perfectly that his wife was not only quite capable of fighting her own battles, but also of holding her own, even against such a formidable antagonist as Lady



Christabel. Doctor Thwaites came—an old man with white hair, but with brown eyes, as keen and piercing as a hawk's.

He examined Bertie's foot, and announced that one of the smaller bones was broken, and it therefore behoved the young officer to keep quiet for some time.

Bertie received the news very ungraciously, and cursed his own foolishness for not having remembered that the foot was weak from its late sprain.

It was especially unfortunate that this fresh accident should come just now, when there were so many calls on his time, for he wanted to be up in town, seeing that every effort was made to find the defaulting solicitor.

There was something else he wanted to look after, too—the condition of a certain race-horse called Pompey; but this he did not confide to his wife. A good deal depended on the events of the next two days.

At Rodwell these two days passed uneventfully enough.

Bertie reposed on the couch in his dressing-room, and made no attempt to come downstairs.

Miss Carbonnell also remained upstairs, so there were two invalids in the house, and Lucinda and Lady Christabel were thrown upon each other for companionship at meal times.

The manner of the Earl's daughter had undergone a sudden change towards her companion.

Instead of assuming the old hauteur, she was pleasant, almost friendly, and even condescended to exchange ideas with Lucinda on other matters than the weather.

The young girl could not quite understand this alteration, but she was too truthful and unsuspicious herself to attribute it to its right cause.

In the evening the two ladies were alone together in the drawing-room, whither they had just come from dinner.

Miss Carbonnell was asleep, and Bertie was having his usual cigar, so that Lucinda did not feel she was needed by either, and took the opportunity of writing a letter to Miss Stewart at Brussels.

Lady Christabel was reading, or pretending to read, in an easy chair near the fire.

The light from a rose shaded lamp on the small table at her side fell on her fair face, and showed it unusually thoughtful.

As Lucinda fastened her letter, and rose with the intention of putting it in the post-bag, Lady Christabel came to her side.

"I have a present for you, Mrs. Carbonnell," she said, pleasantly, holding out a small purple velvet case as she spoke. "Tell me how you like it."

Lucinda made a well bred effort to conceal her surprise as she opened the case; but a little cry of admiration broke from her lips as her eyes fell on its contents.

Reposing on its bed of white satin was a ring, set with one large opal, and surrounded with brilliants, which flashed out a hundred starry points of light with every movement. The opal itself was very lovely, showing changeable waves of soft red, green, and milk white.

"But this is not for me?" said the young girl at last, looking from the ring to the beautiful woman standing at her side, who was watching her intently.

"Yes, it is. Do you like it?"

"It is most lovely! Opals are my favourite stones."

"Are they? I'm glad of that. For myself I never cared for them. People say they are unlucky; of course, it is all nonsense."

"Of course it is!" exclaimed Lucinda, laughing. "I am not superstitious myself, so I am proof against such sayings. And there is no denying that this particular stone is really exquisite!"

"Put it on your finger, and see how it looks."

Cinderella obeyed.

The ring was a little too large for her, and

her small taper finger seemed rather overweighted with it.

Lady Christabel noticed, for the first time, what a beautifully-shaped hand her rival had—quite as white and elegant as her own, and considerably smaller.

"It is rather large for you, but it will be quite easy for you to have it made smaller," she said. "Come and sit by me on the couch, and I will tell you its history."

Lucinda obeyed, more surprised than ever.

"The ring belonged to Bertie's father," said the Earl's daughter, without removing her eyes from her companion's face. "He was a soldier you know, and was out in India for some years. While there, the British troops had to quell a rebellion of one of the native princes, and it chanced that Major Carbonnell saved the life of the Maharajah's daughter. She, in gratitude, gave him this ring, and made him promise that he would give it to the woman he loved best in the world—his first love. He gave it to Bertie's mother, and Bertie—"

She stopped for a moment. Lucinda's lips had grown very white; she felt sick and giddy with a premonition of what was coming.

"Go on," she said, hoarsely, "and Bertie gave it—"

"To me," said Lady Christabel, very gently.

"But in order to keep up the traditions of the ring, I think it should belong to you."

There was a moment's silence. Lucinda's gaze was riveted on the baleful changing lights of the opal, and the pallor in her face became accentuated.

Lady Christabel's manner said so much more than her words. The girl's heart was beating in quick, muffled throbs against her side, but with a strong effort she conquered her agitation sufficiently to say,—

"If Bertie gave it to you, surely you ought not to give it away."

"On the contrary, that is just what I ought to do. Don't you see that it is a love charm? but the charm only acts so long as it is given by its owner to the woman who holds his heart in her keeping. It is right that you should have it now."

"But I don't understand—" faltered the girl.

Lady Christabel interrupted her with a show of impatience.

"There is no mystery. Not quite a year ago Bertie gave the ring to me, and when, in obedience to my father's command, I engaged myself to Lord Earncliffe, it was my duty to give it back to its original owner. I acknowledge my weakness in not doing so, but now I desire to make up for the omission. Don't you see?"

Alas! it seemed to Lucinda that she did see. A sudden flood of light was breaking upon her, and she shrank back as one may shrink from a mortal blow.

"Bertie gave you this twelve months ago—only twelve months ago!" she murmured, almost below her breath.

"Yes, twelve months ago. Surely," exclaimed Lady Christabel, with a well feigned start of astonishment, "you knew we were engaged!"

Lucinda put up her hand to shield her face from the light. Ever afterwards she hated that room, with its pale amber draperies, its rose shaded lamps and its flower-scented air.

A bowl of Russian violets was standing on one of the low side tables, and even in after years she shuddered when their odour came to her, for it always brought back the sick pain of that moment.

"No," she said, weakly. "I did not know."

"Then I am sorry I mentioned it," returned Lady Christabel, regretfully. "I had no idea that you could have lived as long as you did in Thornleigh Castle without hearing of it, from the servants if from no one else!"

The sneer fell unheeded on Lucinda's ears. With her slender hands clasped across her knees, she was staring straight before her into

vacancy her lips set in a strained, tense line, her eyes dark and unseeing.

She loved Bertie so well, with such a perfect simple hearted devotion, that she had never questioned his affection, even though, now and again, she had fancied he did not quite understand her.

She had always comforted herself with the reflection that a fuller knowledge of each other would bring them nearer together, but she had never doubted that she was the one love of his life, never! never!

"I think Bertie failed in his duty in not making a clean breast of his past," went on Lady Christabel, in the same smooth voice, "for he might be quite sure that you would not remain in ignorance of it, and it would surely have been better for you to hear it from his own lips than from a stranger's. Of course there is no harm in it, and no injury to you. Most men are engaged two or three times before they are married, you know."

Most men! Yes; but, for her, Bertie did not come under the category of "most men." He was the one man in the world!

"It is painful for me to have to speak of it, as you will readily understand," the pitiless voice continued. "Still as you have heard so much, it is well that you should hear the rest, in justice to me, for I am sure you must in your heart despise me if you think I threw Bertie over merely for the sake of Lord Earncliffe's title and estates. In thinking that, you would wrong me, seeing I sacrificed myself for the sake of my father."

Lady Christabel! Lady Christabel! How smoothly the lie rolls off your tongue!

"You are probably aware that Lord Thornleigh was in great pecuniary difficulties; but his creditors agreed not to press him for their money until after my marriage, and then I should have been in a position to help him, for my settlements were to have been very generous."

"Well, it seemed to me my duty was clear. Better for Bertie and me to endure a little present misery than for disgrace to cover my father! But, alas!" she added with a deep sigh, "the sacrifice was of no avail, Fate was against us!"

She looked at Lucinda as she finished speaking, and a cold gleam, like the flash of unsheathed steel, shot into her blue eyes.

The girl's face looked drawn and haggard even in that rose-tinted light. Christabel felt that part of her humiliation was avenged.

"I hope I have not done wrong to tell you this," she said, just touching Lucinda's cold hand with her own warm fingers—a contact from which the girl involuntarily shrank back. "Believe me, I have done it for your good."

Then Lucinda raised her eyes, and in them was such scathing scorn for this last lie, that Christabel wished she had left it unspoken.

She rose rather hastily and left the room without another word, and five minutes after her departure, the door opened softly, and Bertie came in.

## CHAPTER XX.

### "POOR CINDERELLA!"

BERTIE had grown very tired of the monotony of his dressing-room, which he had endured for two whole days—forty-eight long hours,—and finding that his wife did not come up to read to him and enliven his solitude, he determined to make an effort to get downstairs for the evening.

He rang for the butler, and that functionary being consulted, said he believed there was such a thing as a pair of crutches somewhere about the premises, and presently reappeared, in triumph, the crutches in his hand.

By the aid of these and the butler's arm, Bertie contrived to get downstairs without putting his lame foot to the ground; but he was conscious of a shock of surprise as he entered the drawing-room, and found his wife

sitting there alone—still with that awful pallor on her face, and gazing out into space with wide unseeing eyes.

He limped to the couch and seated himself beside her.

"Cinderella," he said, "what is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

With an effort she shook off her dream-like abstraction, and even tried to call up a smile to her wan face as she answered,—

"No, I am not—ill. I don't know!" confusedly, and pressing her hand against her brow. "Perhaps I feel rather dazed. I shall be all right in a minute."

The light glittered on the diamonds surrounding the opal, which she still wore, and this was, perhaps, what first drew Bertie's attention to the ring.

He took her hand in his, and bit his lip with an annoyance he could not repress.

"What ring is this, Cinderella?" he asked, quickly.

She raised her heavy eyes to his. "Surely you recognise it, Bertie!"

"Yes, I recognise it, but I do not understand how it got on your finger."

"Lady Christabel has just given it me."

"The deuce she has!" muttered Bertie, under his breath, and looking unfeignedly surprised. "What made her give it to you, I wonder!"

"She said," returned Lucinda, slowly and painfully, "she said that the opal was a love charm, and ought to be given by the man who owned it to the woman he loved best in the world. You gave it to her!"

A dark flash rose beneath the soldier-browed skin, and he pulled hard at his moustache.

"Well!" he said, tentatively.

"She said that you gave it her twelve months ago! Is that true?"

"Yes," he admitted, "it is quite true; but there was no necessity for her to tell you."

"I don't agree with you, Bertie," Lucinda said, a curious gentleness in her voice, as she turned round, and looked into his eyes. "I think, perhaps, it was better for me to know."

"Why?"

"Because I shall understand my position better."

"I don't think I follow you, Cinderella."

She sighed deeply, and her fingers twined themselves restlessly the one in the other.

"Don't you see," she said, "that if you were in love with her twelve months ago, you could not have been in love with me when you asked me to marry you?"

"No!" stonily, "I do not. Love is not eternal."

"Ah, yes!" she exclaimed, quickly. "Love—true love, is eternal—it must be, because of its nature."

If she had been older and wiser—if she had seen anything of the world, or known anything of its ways, she would have bidden her grief in her heart, and never alluded to it. But her nature was so open, and her feelings were so strong, that it never even occurred to her to attempt concealment. She did not doubt what Lady Christabel had said, for now that she had heard the truth, she found it confirmed by her own observation, and, besides, if Bertie had given his heart to that beautiful, radiant siren, was it likely he could recall the gift at will?

No. It was as Lady Christabel said—Fate had been too strong for them, and Bertie had married the wail he had protected, out of a divine instinct of pity for her loneliness and helplessness. All honour to him for his generosity.

"My dear child," the officer said, assuming a matter-of-fact tone, "you are very foolish to distress yourself about a love affair that may have happened before my marriage with you. Believe me, few men arrive at the age of thirty without one or more entanglements of the kind."

"Oh, it is not that!" she exclaimed, while a hot flush swept the marble pallor of her cheek.

"What is it, then?"

"The fear that I have spoilt your life!" she responded, in a very low voice, and looking away from him.

"But that is nonsense, Cinderella. You are as dear and sweet a wife as a man need wish to have."

"Only," she interrupted, "you do not love me!"

He was taken aback by the assertion, and for a few seconds did not reply to it.

"What makes you say that?" he asked, at length. "Have I ever given you cause to complain?"

"Never—never! You have been—you are, all that is good and noble; but that does not alter the fact. In it possible that I could enter into successful rivalry with such a woman as Lady Christabel Kenmore—the most beautiful creature I have ever seen?"

It was characteristic of the girl to speak thus of the Earl's daughter. No mean spite or petty jealousy disfigured the pure whiteness of her soul.

It is true she had resented Lady Christabel's interference with her rights, but that was before she knew the truth.

"My dear girl, that is not the point to be considered," said Bertie, trying to speak very quietly and peacefully, though he would have given a good deal to be out of his present awkward position. "I do not deny that there was a sort of engagement between my cousin and myself, but it came to an end on the very night of my arrival at Thornleigh Castle in September last. I have no wish to deceive you; I will be quite open, and tell you all particulars, if you wish it, only, I ask you, is it wise to dwell on a subject that can only give pain to you?"

He pressed her hand as he spoke, and his voice grew low and tender.

After all, he was very fond of this girl—bride of his, and he would spare her pain if he could.

"In September last—not three months ago! Oh, Bertie! how could you ask me to marry you so soon—so very soon?"

He looked down in embarrassment. He could think of no answer to her question, for he could hardly tell her the brutal truth, namely, that he had thought there was no chance of his ever gaining Christabel, and so he had not much cared what happened to him, or whom he married.

"But I see how it was," she resumed, hopelessly. "Lady Christabel gave you up in order to save her father from ruin, and you—you married me because you thought it was the best way of protecting me from my uncle. Am I not right?"

Again he did not answer.

He dared not tell her a lie, and even if he had, she would not have believed it.

Her head drooped forward on her breast, and for a few minutes there was silence in the room.

Outside, a storm was sweeping over the land with autumnal violence. The rain beat against the window-panes in quick dashes, and the wind wailed and sobbed and shrieked about the house, tearing the remaining leaves from the trees, snapping twigs, and beating down into the sodden earth the few flowers which had survived the summer.

Even the cosy drawing-room, with its violet-scented atmosphere, and its blazing logs of cherry wood, could not wholly escape from the dreary influence of the stormy night.

Lucinda had gauged the situation pretty accurately.

She remembered Bertie's emotion when he read the account of Lord Earncliffe's death in the paper on their wedding-day, and she said to herself,—

"If it had not been for me, he would have been free to marry his cousin."

Of course she knew nothing of the utterly sordid and mercenary motives that had in-

duced Christabel to refuse Bertie, and as Bertie himself was the last man in the world to tell her, there was little prospect of her ever hearing the entire rights of the case.

She only felt that she had come between her best-beloved and happiness, and her whole soul rose up in protest against it.

After a little while she raised her head, and two blood-red spots burned in her cheeks; her eyes were bright and eager with sudden excitement.

"Bertie!" she exclaimed, "surely our case is not hopeless. Surely something can be done to sever the tie between us. I don't know anything about law, but there is such a thing as divorce, is there not?"

He smiled, although his brow contracted at the same time.

"Yes; there is, as you say, such a thing as divorce, but it is not for you and me."

"Why not?"

"Because, for one thing, I do not wish it; and for another the law requires more than a mere mutual desire to sever the marriage bond. My dear Lucinda, you are talking of matters you do not understand. You are excited, upset, overwrought. Go upstairs to your room, and lie down. You will feel quite differently after a good night's rest."

She shook her head. She knew quite well that a night's rest would not alter her convictions, and she could not forget that he had evaded answering her question, when she asked him if he had not married her for the sake of protecting her from her uncle.

Looking back, she saw that though her husband had been kind, thoughtful, and considerate to her, yet he had not uttered one word of love—love such as she had read of, dreamed of—such as she felt towards him.

She had not noticed the omission, simply because she had had no experience of lovers, and had been so wrapped up in the wonder and beauty of her new life, that there was no room in her heart for doubt to enter. But Lady Christabel's words had cleared the mist away. They had been to her the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and having eaten, the scales fell from her eyes.

"As for Christabel," continued Bertie, angrily, "I can only call her conduct abominable. What business had she to come worrying you with such matters as these—raking up the ashes of a dead and gone past, that would have been much better left to die a natural death in oblivion! I'm afraid I shall have to remonstrate with her very strongly."

"Pray do nothing of the sort!" the girl cried, eagerly.

"Perhaps Lady Christabel really thought it would be better for me to hear of it from her than from a stranger."

Bertie shrugged his shoulders significantly. He knew the lady's character better than his wife did, and for his part, he had very considerable doubts regarding the purity of her motives.

"I will not mention it, if you don't wish it," he said, "and after all, perhaps it is better to let the matter drop."

"Let the matter drop!" Lucinda smiled with a weary sort of scorn at the words. As well say that, after the red-hot iron has entered the flesh, the brand will not remain to show where the wound has been.

Bertie could not see the matter from her point of view. To him it was an incident—a very unpleasant one, certainly, but not likely to leave behind it lasting consequences.

He pulled his watch from his pocket and looked at it rather anxiously.

"Nine o'clock!" he said. "I should think the man has brought the post-bag by this time. Just ring the bell, Cinderella, and inquire. I am expecting a letter of some importance."

She obeyed with the child-like docility that she almost invariably displayed towards him. It struck her as strange that he should think of a letter—no matter how important—at such



a moment as this, but her brain was too dazed to argue the matter out.

Yes, the post-bag had come, and there was a letter for Captain Carbondell—indeed, there were half-a-dozen letters, but he flung five of them impatiently aside, and tore open the sixth with quivering anxiety.

Lucinda was not looking at him while he read it. She was standing at the window, from which she had drawn back the curtains, gazing out into the wild storm of the November night.

She felt as if nature sympathised with her in her trouble. The piled-up stack of torn clouds, with a watery moon struggling faintly through the blown rifts, the shower of rain-drops hung from the bare trees as a sudden gust of wind swept through them, the wailing tapping of the ivy leaves against the panes of glass—like ghostly fingers—all seemed in unison with her own tempest-tossed soul.

A sudden exclamation from Bertie made her turn round. He was holding the letter in one hand, and the other was pressed to his brow. But it was his eyes that alarmed his wife—they were so wild and bloodshot.

"Bertie!" she exclaimed going to his side, and kneeling down, "your letter has brought more bad news?"

He nodded sombly.

"Yes," he said, with a harsh laugh. "I thought Fortune had pretty well done her worst, but I find I was mistaken. It could not be enough before, but it is ruin now!"

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A DEBTOR.

In a few words Carbondell explained his position to his wife.

Unknown to her, or, indeed, any of his friends, he still owned the racehorse which, a few months ago, had brought him into such disgrace with his aunt, through the dishonest trainer.

The horse was a good one, and was entered for several races, one of which had just taken place.

Bertie, having every faith in the animal's success, had backed him heavily, and—he had come in a bad third!

"But, Bertie," said Lucinda, a puzzled look in her sad eyes, "I don't see that your position is so much worse than it was before. You told me yesterday you would have to declare yourself bankrupt, and these losses will go in with the rest of your debts."

He moved impatiently in his seat.

"You don't understand, Cinderella. These are debts of honour, and if I can't pay them in full I lose all right to consider myself, or be considered, a gentleman. They are not legal debts—they could not be recovered in a court of law, and therefore it is all the more incumbent upon me to see that they are satisfied in full."

He relapsed into moody silence. All his misfortunes seemed to be coming on him at once, and, to make matters worse, he was physically incapacitated from looking after them.

Lucinda watched him for a few minutes, as he sat with his head buried in his hands; then she said,—

"Let me go and ask Miss Carbondell to help you. She is very kind, and I don't think she'll refuse."

"That is because you don't know her," he responded. "If it were anything but a trifling debt she might possibly, though I don't think she would, do something for me; but she has a perfectly insane prejudice against horseracing in every shape and form. No wonder either, perhaps, for her only brother was ruined by it, and committed suicide in consequence. Ever since my earliest boyhood she has impressed upon me the folly of racing and betting, and you may be quite sure she would be consistent with her lifelong opinions. What a fool I have been—what a weak, silly fool!"

"At least," said Lucinda, bravely, "I can try. That will do no harm."

"And no good either."

"Well, we shall see. I won't disturb her to-night, because it is late, and might prevent her sleeping. But I will go to her first thing in the morning."

Bertie said nothing, and soon afterwards he got the butler to help him upstairs to his dressing-room.

After his departure, Lucinda sat on in the deserted drawing-room, trying to see some definite plan of action out of the mist of uncertainty that surrounded her.

She felt dazed—bewildered. The events of this one evening had followed each other in such rapid succession, that she failed to grasp them with perfect clearness. Only one fact seemed to stand out in letters of fire in her brain. Bertie loved Christabel, not his wife!

Yes, she knew it intuitively now, and she wondered at her own blindness for not having recognized it before. It was characteristic of her that her first thought should be of him, not of herself.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, throwing out her slim hands with a gesture of passionate entreaty. "If I could only make reparation—if I could—if I could!"

Early the next morning she was in Miss Carbondell's bedroom, and was fortunate enough to find the old lady well rested after a good night's sleep, and therefore in a good humour for listening to her visitor.

Lucinda was not a specially good pleader; she blushed and trembled, and was sensitively alive to the difficulties of the task she had undertaken.

Miss Carbondell watched her narrowly while she was speaking. This, it must be remembered, was the first intimation she had received of Bertie's pecuniary difficulties, but she was not at all surprised to learn the catastrophe that had occurred.

"Well!" she said, as the young girl finished, "you have told me no more than I might have expected any moment to hear. Bertie is reckless, careless, untrustworthy."

"Oh, no!" interrupted Lucinda. "You mistake, Miss Carbondell. He is not untrustworthy."

The old lady wagged her head sagely.

"Well—well, keep your own opinion, my dear, but I know better. I am only astonished that his money has not gone before this. What could he expect, when he went and left his affairs to be managed by a scoundrel like Osborne?"

"But he did not know Osborne was a scoundrel," insinuated Lucinda.

"Then he ought to have known it! Do you think I should go and leave my property in the hands of a man whom I couldn't thoroughly trust?"

Lucinda was silent. She wished the old lady would keep to the point—but this is a virtue of which few old ladies are capable!

"As for those gambling debts," continued Miss Carbondell, violently, "I wonder he dared to let you mention them to me. He knows quite well what my opinion of the turf is, and he would do well to respect it. Not a penny of my money shall find its way into bookmakers' pockets!"

This sounded rather hopeless, and Lucinda's heart sank.

"What is he to do?" she murmured, faintly, more to herself than her auditor.

"The best thing for him to do is to declare himself bankrupt and start afresh," was the immediate response. "As for those debts of honour—debts of dishonour, I call them!—there is no necessity for them to be paid at all. There! that is my advice. He may take it or leave it, just as he sees fit."

Miss Carbondell took up her handkerchief and blew her nose with quite unnecessary vigour. There could be no doubt that she was very fond of her money, and it would take a good deal to make her part with it.

"Dear me!" she continued, after a moment's pause, "where do you think I should have been if I had listened to every application for money from my relations? That weak-minded man, Lord Thornleigh, used to be always worrying me, years since, and if I had listened to him, I should have been ruined long ago. It is true I once said Bertie should be my heir, but maturer thoughts have convinced me of the foolishness of trusting him with money, so I shall make you my heiress."

"Me!" echoed the young girl, almost stupefied at the announcement.

"Yes, you. But I shall not allow you to make ducks and drakes of it either, so it will be vested in trustees, and you will only get the interest. The principal will be beyond your reach to dispose of, and will go to your children after your death. I have thought the matter over very carefully, and that seems to me my best plan."

"All the same," said the young girl, unshrinkingly, "and, with all gratitude to you, I don't think it would be right for you to leave all your money to me. There is your niece—Lady Christabel."

"My dear niece," interrupted the old lady, drily. "You forget that her mother was not my own sister, and all my money is derived from my mother's side, so that Christabel Kesteven has no claim upon me whatever; and if she had," went on Miss Carbondell, dogmatically, "I don't know that I should allow it to influence me."

"Besides," she continued, looking Lucinda did not speak, "this is a matter on which I would not allow anyone to advise me. I am going to leave my money to you, but I am not going to pay Bertie's debts. He has got into trouble, he must get out of it as best he can. You may tell him this as my answer, and also tell him that I have no intention of dying for the next ten or twenty years, so he need not be looking out for dead men's shoes!" and with this not very amiable remark, Miss Carbondell turned round in bed, thereby intimating that the interview was at an end.

Lucinda returned to Bertie with her bad news—which was little more than he expected. But he was unfeignedly surprised when she told him of Miss Carbondell's testamentary intentions—so surprised that at first he could hardly believe she had been in earnest in her announcement.

"Oh, she was in earnest!" Lucinda said, a little wearily, as she stood before him, pale faced, and heavy-eyed. "But it may be ten or twenty years' time ere you will benefit in any way by her money. I would willingly forego my prospective heirship for the sake of enough money to pay your debts now."

"You speak very lightly of your expectations," observed Bertie, unable, for all his trouble, to refrain from smiling. "Do you know that my aunt is worth over a hundred thousand pounds?"

"Is she?"—indifferently. "Perhaps I shall not be an heiress after all. Miss Carbondell may change her mind."

"She may, but I don't think she will. As a rule, she sticks to what she says."

That she was in earnest Miss Carbondell gave ample proof, for a servant rode over to the county town that very morning, and in the afternoon the lawyer, Mr. Goodwin, arrived and was closeted with his client for upwards of two hours.

After leaving her, he did not see anyone else, but rode straight off, and directly he had gone, Miss Carbondell rang the bell for Lucinda.

The young girl found her hostess lying back on her pillows, looking rather white and exhausted.

"I am tired," she explained. "I talked so much this afternoon that I feel as if I wanted a rest."

"Put some eau de Cologne on my forehead—perhaps that will refresh me."

Lucinda brought the flask of scent, and



["I RECOGNIZE THE RING," BERTIE SAID, "BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW IT GOT ON YOUR FINGER!"]

emptied some on her handkerchief, with which she bathed the old lady's heated brows.

"That is nice," murmured Miss Carbonnell. "Your fingers are so light, Cinderella, you ought to be a nurse. Some women are born nurses, others are—not. Fancy Christabel Kenmare in a sick room!"

The idea seemed to afford her some amusement, for she smiled grimly. Then a slightly anxious expression stole into her eyes.

"Do you know," she said, "I feel such a queer numbness in my back. I wonder what it means. I think perhaps you had better send off for Doctor Thwaites. He said this morning when he came that if I felt in any degree worse I was to send for him immediately. I don't suppose I really am worse," she added, by way of consoling herself, "only it is just as well to be on the safe side."

"I will send the groom at once," Lucinda said, gently, as with deft fingers she smoothed the pillows, and made the invalid more comfortable, "and I think you had better not talk until the doctor comes. You are overtired, I expect."

"Yes, I expect that is it," agreed Miss Carbonnell, and she lay back, closing her eyes rather wearily.

It was rather late in the evening when the physician arrived, and then Miss Carbonnell seemed to have rallied somewhat. Nevertheless when Doctor Thwaites came out of the invalid's chamber, and Lucinda followed to hear his directions concerning diet, &c., he looked very grave.

"I am afraid the numbness Miss Carbonnell complains of means paralysis," he said, shaking his head. "It is what I have feared all along, and that is the reason I recommended her to lie in bed and keep quiet."

Lucinda looked, as she felt, deeply concerned. She had grown very fond of the old lady in these few weeks.

"What can be done?" she asked.

"Nothing much. Keep her very quiet, and see that she has plenty of beef-tea and

nourishing food. You can do no more. Mind, I do not mean to say my patient is in immediate danger. It is quite possible that the stroke of paralysis may be quite mild, and its effects pass off in a few days. I shall be able to tell you more to-morrow."

All that night Lucinda sat up with the old lady, who dozed at intervals, but still complained of the numbness. In other respects, she was no worse, and in the morning the young nurse hoped to hear a more favourable opinion from the doctor. In this, however, she was deceived, for the latter's looks were graver than ever when he went downstairs.

Bertie had been assisted into the morning room by the butler, and was sitting there when Doctor Thwaites and Lucinda came in, and they had hardly entered when they were joined by Christabel, who announced herself anxious to hear how her aunt was progressing.

"She is progressing in the wrong direction, I am sorry to say," responded the physician—who was one of those men given to calling a spade a spade. "She has been exciting herself and talking more than she should have done, and now the reaction has set in. There is no doubt, too, that she has had a stroke of paralysis, and I am afraid of its affecting the spine. I suppose—" he was addressing Bertie now, "all her affairs are in order?"

"Oh yes! she has made a will."

"Is there any one, do you think, whom she would care to see?"

The question rather startled Bertie—it was so very suggestive. I think not. You see, she has no blood relations except Lady Christabel Kenmare and myself. There is Lord Thornleigh, it is true—but he is only a connection by marriage, and besides, he is out of England."

The physician nodded thoughtfully.

"I think," he said presently, "it would be advisable to have a second opinion. I don't

know that anything more can be done than I am now doing. But, at any rate, it could do no harm."

Bertie cordially assented, as he found himself suddenly called upon to think and act as his aunt's representative.

"Pray send for the best specialist you know," he added. "And, if you anticipate a further relapse, don't you think it would be advisable to get a nurse, too?"

"I have already suggested that, but Miss Carbonnell will not hear of it. She has peculiar notions, you know, and declares that she cannot bear strangers near her—says, in fact, that no one but your wife shall approach her bedside. This is rather hard on Mrs. Carbonnell, for she has been rather a prisoner to the sick-room lately."

Bertie followed the doctor's glance, and noticed how worn and pale Lucinda looked; but it was not the nursing that had had such an effect on her! A bright flush sprang into her cheeks as she saw herself observed, and she said hastily,—

"I do not feel in the least knocked up. I am only too pleased to be able to do anything for Miss Carbonnell, and I do not think there is any necessity for having a professional nurse."

As a matter of fact, she was glad of the diversion the sick room and its multifarious duties afforded from her own sad thoughts. She was so utterly miserable that anything that served to take her out of herself was welcome.

"Could not I relieve Mrs. Carbonnell?" said Lady Christabel, softly.

There was an embarrassed silence, broken at length by the doctor, who rose and drew on his gloves as he spoke.

"We can discuss the question again presently, after the London specialist has given us his opinion. I will wire up to town at once."

(To be continued.)





["I AM MISS DANECOURT, OF THE TOWERS," SHE SAID, WITH COLD REBUE!]

NOVELETTE.]

## BY LOVE'S CONTROL.

—101—

### CHAPTER I.

DAGMAR DANECOURT leaned against the stone parapet of her favourite terrace, and looked over the wide sweep of field and wood stretched out before her.

There was something wistful in the proud eyes, something sorrowful about the haughty mouth, and once or twice she sighed deeply.

This fair land, with its rich pastures, its woods and dells, was her heritage; but none knew better than she how frail was her hold upon it, how feeble her claim.

The Danecourts had fallen on evil days, and there was not an acre of field or garden, not a stone in the grand, grey pile that was not mortgaged.

From her earliest years Dagmar's pride of race had been fostered carefully, steadily, and she had been taught that it rested with her to build up the fallen fortunes of her house.

She was beautiful, with a beauty that took "men's breath away," and she knew it. She was not vain, but she had been taught the value of her charms; and it was impressed upon her that love was not a necessary adjunct to marriage, that money was the one supreme good. And whilst she hated herself for such a resolution, yet determined that at any cost she would save the home of her forefathers, and turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of her own heart.

She had gone through three seasons now, and had had lovers in plenty, but none of them had possessed the necessary qualifications, and so had been summarily dismissed; and men began to be chary of singeing their wings at her flame.

She was twenty now, tall and perfectly formed. The proud head, reared so high, was crowned with auburn masses, which gleamed

in the sunlight like burnished gold; the brows were so dark as to be almost black, and from under them looked violet eyes, so sweet, so proud, that a man might well desire to see the love-light burning there for him. The face was oval, the mouth expressive, and not too small.

Sir Humphrey Danecourt might well exult in his daughter's beauty and grace.

With a gesture of weariness she lifted herself from her half-reclumbent position, and began to walk with quick, impatient steps up and down the terrace.

On her left hand lay the stony road, along which the Danecourt dames had watched gay cavaliers pass and repass, and from which one maiden had witnessed a terrible fight, in which both lover and father had perished. But it was not of these things Dagmar thought as she paced to and fro. The loves and griefs of her ancestresses were forgotten in the remembrance of her galling poverty, of the sacrifice she must make if she would keep her heritage.

The violet eyes turned in the direction of the road. It had been roughly hewn up the hill-side, and walking was not an easy performance. Most people approached The Towers by a more round-about way, and Dagmar knew by instinct whose figure it was toiling towards her, though as yet he was very distant.

It was like this man's dogged determination to scale the hill, to go out of his way to find and overcome obstacles, and sometimes this feature in her lover's character frightened her, for he was her lover, in spite of his age, his huge, ungainly figure, and stiff manners.

The violet eyes darkened, the proud face grew a shade prouder and colder as she stopped in her walk, and watched him as he came.

It was a long time before he joined her, looking flushed and tired.

"Why did you not come by the other route?" she asked, disdaining to see his outstretched hand.

"This is nearer," he answered, stiffly.

"But much rougher walking. Do you wish to see papa, Mr. Cross? He is in the library, I believe."

"Thank you. I came to see you."

She made a slight courtesy, which was not without an element of mockery.

"I am honoured! Shall we go back to the house?"

"As you will. Miss Danecourt, when are you coming to The Cedars again? My sister complains that she is forgotten."

"You must ask papa. And pray inform Miss Cross that I am not good at forgetting my—friends," the last word after some slight hesitation.

All the while he kept his eyes fixed upon her mobile face; but, whether he admired her, whether he was provoked by her coldness, it was impossible to tell, his face was so impassive, his eyes so expressionless.

Certainly he was not a likely man to please the fancy, or win the affection of a young and beautiful girl. He was hopelessly plain, stern-featured, with lack lustre eyes, and iron-grey hair; and, added to this, he was fast nearing fifty; but he was well-born and wealthy. It was a common saying that Cuthbert Cross could buy up the whole town of Danesford, and that his bank was safe as the Bank of England.

As he walked beside Dagmar, and looked into the proud, faintly-flushed face, he knew she did not love him, that he was even somewhat distasteful to her; but he knew, too, that he might have her for the asking—because of all he could give; and he was content to win her at any price.

He loved her madly, and without reason, although such was his strength of will that he gave no sign of his passion or pain.

Together they entered the house, Dagmar leading the way to the library, where a tall, stately-looking man was idly turning the pages of a book before him. He glanced up

quickly as they entered, and something like triumph lit up his dark eyes.

"Come in, Cross. This is an unexpected pleasure. You will stay to luncheon, I hope?"

"Thank you. I will if I may carry you and Miss Danecourt home to dinner. Sarah will be pleased;" he turned to look for Dagmar, but she had already made good her escape to discuss with cook the ways and means of providing a decent luncheon.

Then she once more left the house and wandered aimlessly about the gardens.

Her heart was heavy, her will seemed failing her. How could she give herself to this man? How could she link her life to him? It was too hard, too hard! And yet could she bear to lose The Towers, her own assured position, to go into the world penniless and friendless.

"I will not think of these things," she said at last. "They madden me," and turning with swift feet left the garden behind, and hurrying through a paddock crossed a stile and so came to a meadow, through which flowed a deep and tolerably wide stream.

A boat was moored to the bank, and stepping in, Dagmar took the oars and shot out into the middle of the stream.

This was her favourite exercise, and soon her thoughts took a brighter tinge, her heart grew lighter. The motion was so pleasant, the day so balmy, the scenery so fine, that she determined for this hour to be happy, and succeeded tolerably well.

Cuthbert Cross was almost forgotten, and nothing but the beauty of her now distant home dwelt in her memory.

She rowed until the clang of The Towers clock warned her it was time to return, and with a regretful sigh she bent once more to the oars.

On she went, lest swiftly now, and her face began to harden, her eyes to darken. She started with a little cry when a voice from the bank called to her,—

"Stop, please. I beg your pardon, but will you give me a little assistance?" and turning her head, she saw a young man holding to a tree—a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, with frank grey eyes and yellowish-brown hair. His face was white as if with pain, but he smiled as he spoke, and his smile was pleasant to see.

Dagmar drew into the bank.

"What is it you want?" she asked, calmly, whilst the stranger was silent a moment, struck dumb by her wonderful beauty.

"I think I have dislocated my ankle; at all events, I can't walk, and I've been waiting here more than an hour for someone to come along and play the good Samaritan."

"Where did it happen—the accident, I mean?" questioned Miss Danecourt.

"About a stone's throw from here. I called to you as you went up the river, but you did not hear; and as no one else came along I managed to drag myself as far as this, hoping you would return."

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Send someone to my assistance, if you will be so good. I dare say one of the servants at the house up yonder would be willing to 'help a lame dog over the stile' for a consideration. Is there any inn where I could stop?"

"Yes, about half a mile lower down;" she paused a moment, then said, without any trace of shyness or coquetry, "I will row you there, if you can get into the boat and care to trust me. It will be better than waiting till other help comes."

He manfully attempted to reach her, but she saw by the compression of his pale lips how much he was enduring, and hastened out to help him.

"Lean on me. I am very strong," she said, gravely; and by slow degrees contrived to get him to the boat. Then she took up her oars, blushing a little under the stranger's intent regard, his warm words of thanks.

"Let me do that," he said. "My ankle doesn't incapacitate me from rowing."

"Please sit still. I can manage very well," and seeing she was determined he let her have her way.

"I'd no idea," he said, presently, "such a little thing would throw me over. I trod on a loose stone, and before I could say 'Knives' over I went."

She glanced curiously at him. He looked a gentleman, and his voice was peculiarly pleasant and refined, and yet there was a wide contrast between his manner and that of the men she daily met. It was so frank and free, without bordering on familiarity or disrespect, and she was rather favourably impressed with this son of Anst.

"It is a pretty country about here," he went on, his keen grey eyes taking in every new form of beauty round; "and it has the merit of being entirely fresh to me. I only came over from Australia last week."

"You are a Colonist?" she asked, carelessly.

"Born and bred in Brisbane; but the governor is English to the backbone, and he was especially desirous I should visit the mother-land. He gave me quite a list of places I must see, and amongst them the house up yonder—The Towers—I think she called it. I was going up there when this accident occurred."

"It is not a show place," Dagmar said, very coldly. "I'm afraid your intonation of seeing it will be frustrated."

He scarcely heeded the change in her manner as he answered lightly,—

"Oh! I always succeed when my heart is in the affair; and the governor seemed so particularly anxious I should see the place, I wouldn't like to disappoint him. At one time in his life he lived pretty near here I fancy."

Her eyes looked the question she would not ask.

"My name is Lennox," he said, understanding and replying to the look, "Frank Lennox; my father is Thomas Lennox."

"I do not know the name; Mr. Lennox, this is your inn. If you will excuse me I will call the landlord to your assistance," and stepping out she went swiftly up the bowling green towards the trim, white-washed house.

Frank Lennox concluded she must be a creature of some consequence as the butly landlord came out to her bowing profoundly, and listening deferentially to her rapid explanation. Then he summoned an ostler to his assistance, and together they lifted the young man from the boat. Then he paused,—

"Whom have I to thank?" he asked in his direct way. "And shall I not see you again?"

"I am Miss Danecourt of The Towers," she answered with cold rebuke, and bowing slightly, left him to the mercies of Beniface and his help.

"So that is Miss Danecourt," he said, when he had watched the boat out of sight and was being rather roughly propelled towards the inn.

"Yes, sir; she's a beautiful young lady; most as lovely as her mother was before her; and she can be pleasant spoken when she likes, but she's as proud as Lucifer!"

"Proud, eh? Of her beauty do you mean?"

"No; she don't seem to care about that, for she's out in all weathers; hail, rain, or sun, it's all one to her. But she's as proud as Lucifer of her name and her blue blood, sir; why, I believe she thinks England couldn't get along without the Danecourts."

"It is a powerful family, then?"

"It was, sir; but they're fallen on bad times. Sir Humphrey and his daughter, they're as poor as church mice, though you wouldn't think it perhaps. They do say Miss Dagmar will marry Mr. Cross, the banker from Danesford; but I say it will be a sin and a shame if she does; he's fifty if he's a day, and as uncouth as a bear. Mind the

step, sir; hadn't I better send for the doctor?"

"I think you had, my ankle is swelling enormously; and just bring me a soda and brandy to steady my nerves. Let me have your best room—and I say, landlord, let me have a little of your society, or I shall soon behipped."

To all of which orders John Truffles gave strict attention.

## CHAPTER II.

The gentlemen were pacing up and down the terrace, when Dagmar returned, Sir Humphrey looking a trifle vexed.

"You are very late, Dagmar," he said, and she answered carelessly,—

"I thought I should be; but I met with an adventure that delayed me considerably."

"What was that, Miss Danecourt? Or is it to remain a secret?"

"Oh, no! I've been playing a very amateurish Samaritan! Just below Fanford Pool I came upon a young man who had sprained his ankle, or something of the kind—he asked me to get assistance."

"My dear Dagmar!" ejaculated Sir Humphrey, aghest at the impertinence of such a request; but the young lady continued composedly.

"I represented to him that to get help would be to lose time, and in some way contrived to get him to the boat, and then rowed him down to John Truffles."

"Dagmar! Dagmar! What an outrage upon propriety?"

"I am above criticism," she answered, loftily, whilst a look of pride a moment marred her face. "And he was a stranger."

"It was imprudent, very imprudent!" Mr. Cross announced coldly.

"He was a gentleman, as well as a stranger," was the response, and she led the way to the house, the gentlemen following slowly. At table the talk reverted to Dagmar's protégé, much to the annoyance of the banker.

"Did he tell you his name, my dear?" asked Sir Humphrey, with more interest than he usually displayed.

"Yes; he is Frank Lennox, an Australian, on a visit to England, and when the accident happened was on his way here, believing, I think, that this was a show place. I quickly undeceived him, but he clung to the idea that he could obtain an entrance."

"If he is a decent young fellow I don't see any reasonable objection to it," said Sir Humphrey blandly. "It will be something for him to remember and take pride in all his life!"

"He seemed more anxious to please his father in the matter than himself," laughed Dagmar, "and says at one time Mr. Lennox lived near The Towers."

"He seems to have been very communicative," remarked Mr. Cross, showing his displeasure openly.

"He was," the girl answered, wickedly; "very, and particularly pleasant spoken. Really, papa, you ought to call upon him."

"Perhaps I will," he began, when the banker interrupted him in his slow, stiff, way.

"You owe it to your position, Danecourt, to exercise great judgment in forming acquaintances or friendships; for anything you know to the contrary, this fellow may be the son of some rascally convict."

He knew well how to play upon this proud man's weakness, and whilst despising him for his overweening pride, used it to gain his own ends. Sir Humphrey hesitated now, and Dagmar struck in.

"Supposing such to be the case, Mr. Cross, would you have the son suffer for his father's crime?"

"It is the way of the world, and we have Scriptural authority for it."

"I have heard that our common enemy can



quote Scripture to his own advantage," she retorted, contemptuously, and turned her proud glance significantly upon him. But if she hurt him he gave no sign, his face was impassive as ever, his eyes as cold; and strange as it may seem her very pride was dear to him; he loved not only her, but her faults, and would not have changed her if he could.

There was no weakness in her nature—weakness was intolerable to him—and he gave little thought to the fact that should she consent to be his wife, their two wills must invariably clash to their mutual misery.

He watched her every movement now, exulting in her ripe beauty, thinking how well his precious diamonds would become the stately white throat, the fair arms, and sun-kissed hair; how he would adorn that *velvet* figure with costly laces and all precious fabrics! She could not fail to be happy, he thought, having wealth and homage. And on their wedding day he would present her with The Towers, freed from all mortgage and encumbrances.

He could fancy how the grand eyes would light up then, how the proud, fair face would flash with joy and gratitude, "and from that hour she will learn to love me," he thought.

He left The Towers that day, content, almost happy; true, Dagmar had been unusually cold, but then a woman should be reserved with her lover, should not be too easily won; and she had promised to dine with him that night; then he would put his fate to the test.

He had no fear of her answer, it was to her own advantage to say yes, and he quite believed she was a woman to be envied. If Dagmar did not under-rate her charms, neither did he his wealth and importance.

Dagmar spent the long afternoon in wandering about the neglected gardens, and trying to find some loop-hole of escape from her fate. Instinctively she knew that to-night she would be called on to decide that momentous question she dreaded to hear, with sick dread; and gradually she grew to believe she would do a grand and noble thing in putting aside all love or hope of love, for her father's and his name's sake.

So her resolve was taken, and as she made it, it seemed to her all the beauty and brightness of the day faded around and about her.

She took small pains with her toilet that night; "He shall see me as I am," she thought. Disdainfully, "without what small adjuncts of dress I can command."

Her choice, which was rather restricted, fell upon a black net, totally devoid of ornament or colour; but the severe simplicity of it served only to display every line and curve of her exquisite figure; while the sombreness of its hue, heightened rather than detracted from the beauty of her skin, the lustre of her hair. She looked at herself with dissatisfied eyes, thinking then that her beauty was but a fatal gift, almost wishing she had been born homely.

When she went downstairs her father exclaimed at her funeral attire, and to please him she fastened a cluster of blood-red ornaments at her throat, and another at her waist; then, without further preparation, they started for The Cedars.

Miss Cross, who was singularly unlike her brother, being short, fair, and plump, welcomed Dagmar with effusion, now and then comically timed with awe, the girl's manner being cold and proud in the extreme.

Her talk was mostly of "Guthbert and his doings," and she expatiated largely on the happiness of the woman he should make his wife.

"My dear," she said, confidentially, "he might choose from the best and noblest of the land; and any sensible girl would be glad and grateful for the honour done her. Young men are not to be trusted; they are most unstable and volatile; whilst Guthbert's tastes and habits are all formed, and he thoroughly knows his own mind."

"He is old enough to do so," Dagmar responded, with weary disdain.

The spinster's platitudes and thinly veiled hints angered her. She was heartily glad when dinner was announced.

Her host talked but little to her, but she felt his watchful eyes never left her face; that already he was regarding her as his own especial goods and chattels. That thought brought a flush to her cheeks, and added brilliancy to her beautiful eyes; and Sir Humphrey regarded her with un concealed satisfaction.

The gentlemen did not sit long over their wine, and when they joined the ladies the banker went at once to Dagmar's side. Miss Cross smiled significantly.

"Miss Danecourt, I have an especially beautiful lotus I want to show you; will you come?"

Without a word she rose and went with him; if the sacrifice was to be made, well, it were wise to make it at once.

Together they went through houses positively crowded with blossoms and plants of every colour and species; the banker talking all the while of indifferent things. At last they passed into one house so hot that Dagmar felt suffocated by the heat and humid air.

"I will not keep you here long," her companion said, with a glance at her flushed face. "Here is the lily, I think you will acknowledge it is superb."

The great, beautiful blossoms nestled amongst the flat leaves and still water. They were many, and perfect in hue and shape. Dagmar gave a little cry of admiration as she bent over them.

"I never saw anything so beautiful," she said, "I could not even imagine it."

He was pleased with her pleasure, but would not give her much time to examine or admire the Lotus flowers.

"This place is too hot," he said, "let us get out of it," and he stayed only at the door to point out a magnificent fern. Reaching a cooler atmosphere, he begged her to sit down, whilst he gathered some flowers for her, and inwardly trembling, outwardly calm, she obeyed. Then he left her, to return presently, laden with a colonial bouquet.

"You have been spoiling your plants for me," Dagmar said, as she took the flowers from him. "I wish you had not done so, Mr. Cross."

As he stood looking down upon her his cold eyes took a warmer expression, his hard face softened; but he was a man utterly devoid of courtier-like ways, utterly incapable of eloquence; and so he said abruptly, almost harshly, "Dagmar, I want to speak to you."

It was coming then! She repressed a shudder, and grasping her flowers tightly, made a sign that she was listening. She was grateful to him that he did not attempt to touch her then.

"I want you for my wife. Your father wishes our union, and, for your own sake, I believe it is advisable."

Not a word of love! She was thankful, she could the better bear to make her sacrifice. She looked up into his eyes, and seeing the passionate light there, averted her own.

"I will marry you," she said quite quietly, although her heart was as lead in her bosom; and she gave him one slender hand in ratification of her promise. He held it awkwardly, as if not knowing what to do with it, and how could she guess that every pulse in his body was throbbing with mad joy; that his brain was giddy with sudden, exquisite rapture?

"I may speak to Sir Humphrey, I may tell him it is settled?"

She bowed; for the life of her she could not speak; so he stooped, and lightly pressing his lips to her beautiful hair led her back to the drawing-room. She was most grateful to him for his forbearance; it seemed to her that to-night she could not have borne the protestations and caresses of happy love. Sir Humphrey at a glance saw the condition of affairs, and saw, too, Dagmar was in no mood for much congratulation. He only shook hands

with the banker, calling him a lucky fellow; and patting his daughter's cheek, declared this was the happiest day of his life. Miss Cross was more effusive, but her brother stopped her flow of congratulations very unceremoniously, so that Dagmar was left in peace.

As they drove home through the clear still night Sir Humphrey said,—

"Our home is saved, Dagmar."

"Yes."

"And I have to thank you; my dear, I hope you will be very happy," and stooping he kissed the pale proud face.

"It would have killed me to lose the old place; now I may take a new lease of life."

She turned to him with a sudden touch of tenderness and compassion.

"I am glad if I have pleased you," she said, very, very gently, and returned his kiss, "but do not talk of my engagement to-night. I am tired!"

Tired! something more than tired! Sick to the soul, ashamed and degraded in her eyes by the bargain she had made; afraid, yes, horribly afraid of the future. "Bought and sold! bought and sold!" so ran her thoughts, "what a despicable wretch I am."

Very wearily she climbed up to her own room that night; and, leaning out of the window, drank in deep draughts of the cool, dewy air.

"The woodbine spices are wafted abroad,  
And the musk of the rose is blown."

But she did not heed sweet scents or sounds. The nightingale's music in the adjoining woods was unheard by her; the loveliness of the summer night was a blank. She only knew that with her own hand she had sealed her doom; with her own hand thrust aside love and joy.

Strange that in the midst of her pain and shame, her vague fears and longings, the bright, frank face of the Australian should so persistently rise before her.

She was angry that it should be so. Why should she remember him? What had they in common?

Impetuously rising, she began hastily to undrobe. She was very tired, and, despite her misery, fell asleep easily; and her last waking thought was that she had saved The Towers at so great a cost to herself that she sleepily regarded herself very much in the light of a martyr.

Poor, proud, misguided Dagmar!

### CHAPTER III.

SIR HUMPHREY was full of the milk of human kindness as he took his coffee the next morning.

He was relieved of all pecuniary embarrassments, his daughter's future was assured, and for the remainder of his life he would live in peace and ease as befitting a Danecourt.

He was disposed, even, to forget his high estate so far as to smile kindly upon his inferiors, and to overwhelm them with his gracious condescension.

"What are you going to do with yourself, Dagmar?" he asked presently.

"I do not know," listlessly. "Do you want me, papa?"

"Oh, no; and I dare not claim you now if I did!" with a feeble attempt at jocularity. "I have a most formidable rival in Cross. I suppose he will come over this morning."

"I really cannot say. Possibly he will, although the heat is insufferable. But Mr. Cross is never governed by the rules that bind other men."

Sir Humphrey smiled vaguely.

"I must repeat that compliment to him, my dear! Really, it is high praise to be called 'unique.'"

"I did not intend it for praise," coldly. Then, lifting her eyes to his, she said, passionately, "Surely, papa, between ourselves we may drop this miserable farce, and be true!"

"I—I do not understand!" he murmured, staggered by her manner. "I wish, my dear, you would not be so violent, so—so startling!" She laughed bitterly.

"Ah, papa! what hypocrites we all are! Never mind, let us say no more on the unsavoury subject. But you must not jest with me about *him*; and you must not affect to believe that in winning The Towers I have won happiness.

He was as passionate as he was proud and weak, so he flashed on her,—

"You are an ungrateful girl to quarrel with such a lot as yours! What more can you wish? A well-born, wealthy husband, who madly loves you—"

"I am satisfied!" she interrupted, swiftly. "Do not let us fall out."

He was rather afraid of Dagmar's outbursts; and, after muttering some incoherent complaints, allowed himself to be coaxed into good humour again.

"After all," he thought, "she has saved the estate; and she isn't a girl to break her word. On the whole, I am quite content."

"I think," he said, pushing aside his cup, "I think it would only be a kind and friendly thing to visit that young man at John Truffles. You see, the accident occurred on my property, and it would be quite proper for me to call upon him."

"Take care, papa," Dagmar said, with a spice of malice; "he may be only a prosperous convict's son!"

Sir Humphrey looked displeased.

"I do not like low jests; and Lennox is a good name, a very good name! Many aristocrats emigrate now to *recoup* their fortunes, my dear! Yes; I shall certainly call. I feel gratified that he should have travelled so far chiefly to see The Towers; and with that he left her.

Presently she saw him crossing the garden; and, sighing, went to give her few simple orders for the coming day.

Meanwhile Sir Humphrey made his leisurely way towards the "Stump and Maggie."

He was going to please himself, and overwhelm the colonial at the same time; and admiration and homage were the breath of life to him.

John Truffles saw his tall figure strolling along the river bank, and went out to meet him, bowing with every sign of humility.

Frank Lennox, looking out of the old-fashioned window, laughed.

"Great Scott! Who have we here?" he soliloquised. "Is it the Grand Mogul? What an ass Truffles is making of himself! Who can he be? Coming here, too!"

Further meditations were interrupted by the entrance of John.

"You're in high favour, sir, excuse me. Sir Humphrey Danecourt has sent to know if you will be pleased to see him?"

"Sir Humphrey! oh! he's *her* father! Yes, tell him he may come in," answered this irreverent young man. John felt shocked, and as he went slowly back composed a suitable reply to the Baronet's request.

Mr. Lennox is deeply grateful and highly honoured by your visit, Sir Humphrey, and will you please to follow me?"

Two seconds later the tall, spare figure stood in the narrow doorway. Frank turned his handsome head, and smiled slightly,—

"Come in, come in, if you please. You will excuse me rising. My ankle won't allow any exercise."

He was certainly not overwhelmed. He was a very free young man, thought the visitor, with some misgivings as to his wisdom in calling, and he frowned a little as he advanced,—

"I thought Mr.—Mr.—"

"Lennox!" suggested Frank, carelessly.

"Thank you. I thought, Mr. Lennox, I should but be fulfilling my duty as a Christian gentleman in calling to inquire for you. Your accident happening on my estate gives you a claim to my consideration you could not otherwise have had."

Frank had great difficulty in controlling his features. To him Sir Humphrey was an amusing study. His grandiose air was particularly funny to the young Colonial.

"You are very good," he contrived to say, "but won't you sit down?"

Sir Humphrey took a chair at a little distance from the invalid.

"I understand you have dislocated your ankle?"

"No; it is only a severe sprain, and I shall be about again in nine or ten days; but it is awfully rough on a fellow to be tied by the leg in such a place and such weather, I'm bound to get hipped."

His language was high Dutch to his visitor, who found it very hard to sustain the conversation; but, after an awkward pause, he said,—

"I understand your father still lives. I believe Miss Danecourt said something to the effect?"

"Yes, he is alive and jolly," answered Frank, his fine, grey eyes lighting up. "I expect he is on his way now to join me. You see he found he couldn't stand the separation, and naturally wishes to visit his native land after such an absence."

"Has he been long away?"

"Only a matter of thirty years or so," lightly.

"May I ask" (this with the air of a patron) "what trade or profession he follows?"

"He's a grazier—one of the most successful ones I know; and *he is a gentleman!*"

Sir Humphrey could hardly understand how the two things could be combined; but he said, politely, "he is of good old family. The name implies that."

"I'm sure I can't tell you," candidly, "pon my honour I don't think we're burdened with relatives of any sort; we stand alone, he and I."

The other's face took an added shade of pride.

"He must be a man of *some* taste to admire, and wish you to admire such grand old buildings as England boasts."

"Oh, that was not his primary motive," laughed Frank, flushing a little, "he also commissioned me to find a wife, subject, of course, to his approval."

Sir Humphrey's stare of blank amazement was once more too great for Frank's gravity; he burst into a shout of laughter, which did not tend to mollify his visitor.

"You are a very dippant young man, I fear," he said, as soon as he could make himself heard; "but you ought to know that Englishmen do not countenance adventurers."

"I am not an adventurer," coolly, "my father is prepared to do something handsome for me if my choice pleases him. As for myself I prefer freedom at present."

His candour was so perfect that even Sir Humphrey smiled.

"And what qualifications must the lady thus selected possess?"

"She must be amiable, of course; but her personal appearance is a matter of no importance, only she must be a lady in every respect."

"Englishmen of rank are not in the habit of giving their daughters to—to men of no position," haughtily.

"No; but occasionally they sell them, which is worse."

Clearly this young man was no respecter of persons, whether he was to be most pitied or condemned Sir Humphrey could not tell. He rose with his grandest air, and wishing Frank a frigid good morning, prepared to go. But this was not Frank's wish.

"Stay, if you please," he said, quickly, "it is so confoundedly lonely here by myself; and upon my soul I'm awfully obliged to you, Sir Humphrey, for taking compassion on me."

It was more than I dared hope."

The elder man turned. His expression showed he was wavering, and Frank was quick to take advantage of his weakness.

"I daresay my way of talking is queer to

you; but you must make allowance for the difference of training; pray sit down!"

Sir Humphrey hesitated, then complied. The young man was not without good points, and when he insisted that his visitor should take iced claret with him Sir Humphrey did not demur.

"Miss Danecourt informed me yesterday that The Towers is not a show place, so I know I am taking a great liberty in pressing my wish upon you; but I should be so sincerely obliged if on my recovery you would give me entrance."

He looked so handsome, so honest, as he sat with his shapely head thrown back, that Sir Humphrey's heart warmed to him. If he had had a son he should have wished him to resemble this Colonial, at least, in physique; and half unconscious how it came about he found himself chatting easily of the grandeur of his house, his race—a theme of which he never tired.

He even pressed Frank to make as early a visit to The Towers as possible, promising that he or Miss Danecourt would be *cicerone*. Then at last he took his leave, reflecting as he went "a very pleasant young man, but underbred," which was exactly what Frank was not.

John Truffles looked into the room.

"He is a very grand gentleman, Mr. Lennox, eh?"

"He is an insufferable old prig. Do you grow many like him?" which heretical speech fairly staggered honest John. He retreated to the tap-room to meditate upon it.

Sir Humphrey, at peace with himself and the world, returned to The Towers to find Dagmar and her lover seated under a wide-spreading chestnut, the young lady looking excessively weary.

"Ah! Cross. I've been out betimes, you see. Quite an 'early bird.' I really think the happy event of last night has renewed my youth."

Dagmar said nothing. She was trifling with some flowers she held, and her eyes were cast down.

"I am glad you have come," returned Outhbert Cross, in the stiff, slow way, so irritating to his *fiancée*. "I have been having an argument with Dagmar. I see no reason why our marriage should not take place as soon as possible."

"There is none. I am sure she agrees with you on that point."

"On the contrary, she wishes to delay it until December."

"Nonsense! nonsense! Why, Cross, you must make allowance for a young girl's shyness. I should say everything can be in trim by September."

The girl lifted her eyes and looked steadily into her father's, which fell before her strange gaze.

"In this one thing my wishes should be consulted," she said, coldly. "I have fixed the fourteenth of December for the happy day (with the slightest possible sneer) and I am resolved not to change my mind."

"Then there is no more to say," returned Cross, in a vexed tone. "It is useless to combat your resolution."

"Quite, Mr. Cross," and rising, she walked to a little distance, there to linger amongst the tall white lilies and crimson roses she so loved.

Presently her lover joined her.

"Come with me out of sight of the house. I have something to show you."

She obeyed him, but her mouth was very mutinous, and her beautiful eyes hard.

Screened from view by shrubs and trees he took her hand, and without a word, slipped a splendid hoop of diamonds upon her finger.

She flushed, started, then said in a lower voice than usual,—

"Thank you. It is very beautiful!"

"May I kiss you?" he asked, humbly and deprecatingly.

She turned her hot cheeks unwillingly to



him and submitted to his caress with what grace she could.

"Why will you not come to me sooner?" he asked, emboldened by her concession. "I am too old to waste many months in waiting."

"A woman is not usually governed by reason or logic," she said, half smiling; and the circle of gold and jewels, sign and seal of her bondage, seemed to burn the finger it adorned.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Cross had been called to Paris on important business, and Frank Lennox, out for the first time, had gone up to The Towers leaning upon a stick.

Sir Humphrey himself conducted him through the spacious rooms and long corridors, and pleased with his enthusiasm, gave him an informal invite to luncheon.

Frank was nothing loth to accept. His ankle was growing painful again, and threatened to swell; so he sat down with the baronet and his daughter, who was looking paler, but lovelier (he thought) than when he last saw her. She seemed weary too, and her smiles were faint, her words few.

"Are not you well, Miss Danecourt?" he ventured to ask.

She lifted her languid, lovely eyes to his. "Quite, thank you; but the heat tries me a little," and she relapsed into silence.

He had heard of her engagement to Cuthbert Cross, but he did not believe in its existence; and when he saw no gleam of a betrothal ring upon her hand he was convinced the rumour was without foundation.

He did not guess that the girl had removed the badge of her slavery as soon as her lover was summoned away, that she never meant to resume it until his return.

How beautiful she was! If only her face were a shade less proud she would be perfect. He wished she would join more freely in the conversation, he liked the music of her low voice; and he listened eagerly when she was induced to speak.

Luncheon ended Sir Humphrey rose, and pressing the young man to stay the remainder of the day, he retired to the library, where "some important papers needed his attention," this was always his excuse for his sista; and Frank found himself alone with his hostess.

"What shall we do with ourselves?" he asked, smiling over at her.

"Would you like to go into the gardens; they are nice just now?"

"I would prefer a row down the river; you could steer."

"It is very hot for exertion of any kind; but if you think it will not harm you to walk to the bank, I have no objection;" so they went.

It was very pleasant to Dagmar, sitting almost idle, listening to her companion's frank speech. A soft breeze sighed through the overhanging trees, which cast a grateful shade upon the clear, smooth water, and the whole earth was ripe with sweet scents and sounds. Frank rested on his oars and looked at her.

"That is better," he said, "You have some colour in your cheeks now."

She blushed slightly, and laughed a little; his open ways were so refreshing, he was so big, so strong, so kindly, so very, very natural, that instinctively she trusted him, although she was not given to sudden likings.

"So you expect your father will join you?" she asked, ignoring his speech.

"In a short time, yes. We shall journey back together."

"And your mother, does she not come too?"

"I have no mother, she died at my birth, five-and-twenty years ago; besides my father I have no one; my mother was the only child of an only child. There is a similarity in

our positions, Miss Danecourt; you seem not overburdened with relatives."

"Oh, I've a great many cousins, although I am not familiar with them. Papa, however, is the last male on his side of the house. His only brother died years ago."

"That was a blow to him."

"I don't know. I fancy they were not very good friends. My uncle was the eldest son, and I believed he loved my mother; but when she chose papa, he went off to Australia and never returned."

"Did you never hear of him again?"

"Yes, he wrote papa, several times; then came a silence followed by convincing proofs of his death, so papa took possession. It is a sore grief to him that none of my brothers lived to uphold the glory of our race."

"You are very proud of your name?"

The flush on her cheek answered him, even before she spoke.

"There is no older family, and none more noble in England!" she said.

"Do you know I can't quite understand your pride in your long lineage. (I am a Colonial remember); to me it seems far nobler to raise oneself from a low estate, than to be great by descent—that is merely an accident of birth, and no matter for self-gratulation."

She looked at him in haughty displeasure.

"Your view is peculiar. I am sorry I cannot agree with you, Mr. Lennox."

"I am unfortunate to offend you," he said, gravely; but you would surely not deny my right to form an opinion. It seems to me that the best man is he,—

"Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

The rebuke was spoken so kindly, so frankly, that Dagmar was ashamed of her petulant display.

"You hardly understand," she said, gently, "and I suppose no amount of explanation would make it clear to you, Mr. Lennox."

"I am afraid not; I am a dull dog!" smiling kindly back at her, "and so let us talk of more congenial topics," and he began to tell her wonderful stories of his native land, describing people and scenes so vividly, so graphically that she seemed to see them.

She had never spent so pleasant an afternoon, and was sorry when the lengthening shadows warned her they must go home. Sir Humphrey met them on the bank, and giving the Colonial a general invite, carried his daughter off with him. He had no fear for her, she was a Danecourt, and for her to love a plebeian was impossible; there could be nothing offensive in such intercourse to Cross; then, too, Dagmar, looked so much brighter and better for her trip that he was pleased. And the girl herself thought of no evil. Frank was pleasant company, and made a break in the monotony of her life, and although, she was quite sure Cuthbert Cross would object to their acquaintance, she saw in this no reason to deny herself a little amusement.

So the days wore by, or fled rather, and life took a new aspect for Dagmar. She grew afraid of herself, of the strange, wild joy and fear alternately possessing her; of that great throb of gladness which turned her sick and faint when Frank came; of the tremor which possessed her if he but touched her hand; of the chill disappointment if he failed to come (though indeed that was rare) and the eagerness with which she watched for the first glimpse of the magnificent figure, hurrying across the distant meadow.

She would not confess even to her own heart that she loved him, that he alone could make her happiness or woe, and yet she was vaguely and miserably conscious of this. As for Frank, well against his will and judgment, he returned her passion with a strength and fervour beyond all words to tell.

She was not the sort of woman he had ever dreamed of, not at all his ideal, despite her beauty and her grace; she had many faults, and he saw them plainly enough, and there

was much he wished changed in her; and yet he loved her with all his soul.

He was the first who had ever dared to chide her for her intense pride, and he never scrupled to do so, whilst she wondered at her meekness in enduring his rebukes.

One day, after a very pronounced exhibition of the Danecourt spirit, he stood looking gravely at her until she asked,—

"What are you thinking? Something to my disadvantage?"

"Of some lines I once read, and now apply to you,—

'By pride  
Angels have fallen ere thy time.'

And that pride is the 'sole alloy of thy most lovely mould.'"

She flushed over throat and brow, and at first he thought her angry, but in a moment she undeceived him.

"I am afraid," she said, almost meekly. "I am afraid I often disgust you, but you must try to make allowance for my training. I have been reared in pride, and pride alone can help me in the dreary life before me."

"As how? Miss Danecourt, if you knew how infinitely lovelier you are in this softer mood, you would always wear it."

"Should I?" with a bitter little laugh. "I think not; my beauty has never brought me any happiness."

"Not the happiness of being beloved? Surely you are forgetful."

She turned from him, but not before he had seen the look of startled fear and pain upon the exquisite face; he possessed himself of one slender hand.

"What is the trouble, Dagmar? Is it anything in which my assistance is possible?"

She snatched her hand from him.

"No, no; no one can help me, and few would pity me!" and without another word she walked hurriedly away.

He did not seek to follow her; he saw, that for some reason she was best alone.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" he mused, as he turned towards the inn. "I daresay her poverty galls her; please Heaven that source of pain shall soon be a stranger to her if she will only listen to me, my darling, my queen."

Dagmar entered the hall, where the light lay in patches on the grey and white marble, and shone on the faces of an old Danecourt and his lady; the former reputed to be the proudest of his proud race; she glanced hurriedly into his dark face, and to her excited imagination it seemed to look scornfully and reproachfully down at her; she moved slowly away and went to the breakfast-room, where some letters awaited her—one bore a foreign stamp.

All her strength seemed to fail her then; mechanically she took it up, and moving to a window, sat down on the deep sill.

Slowly she opened it, and read with whitening lips the few stiff lines so characteristic of the writer.

"DEAR DAGMAR,—

"I shall return to Danesford by the earliest train from Dover on Thursday, and shall do myself the pleasure of seeing you at an early hour of the evening. Trusting you and your esteemed father are well,

"Yours devotedly, C. C."

She let the letter fall from her nerveless fingers, and sat looking out with unseeing eyes over the lovely land. This most unwelcome letter had shown her all her heart, and with a wild horror, she realised that Frank Lennox was more than all the world to her.

In this hour of extremity she was weak as a little child, crushed to the earth with the burden of her bitter agony and shame. Bound by honour to a man she now loathed, vowed to save her heritage by the supreme sacrifices of self. What had she to do with love? Oh, fool and blind! so to drift with the tide; so to forget her bond and the traditions of her race.

What maiden of her line had ever stooped to a plebeian unknown lover?

And yet, and yet—if she were free, how glad would she be to throw herself upon his breast, and there renounce all that she had once held dear, for his love's sake.

"It would have been better to have died before I saw his face," she thought. "Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven! what remains for me now?"

Pale and still she sat, neither weeping nor moaning, and the light faded slowly from the sky, the shadows deepened and darkened all around and about her; and still she sat there unconscious of passing time, heedless of all save her wordless, fearless agony.

Presently a servant entered.

"Shall I serve dinner, Miss; Sir Humphrey dines with Mr. Lennox."

She shivered at his name, and answered in so strange a tone that the man wondered.

"No thank you. I want nothing, unless you bring me a glass of water."

She did not change her position whilst he hastened to obey; and her voice was all but inaudible when she spoke again.

"Who brought Sir Humphrey's message? How long since?"

"Willie Truffles, miss; half an hour ago."

"Thank you. You may go."

And when the door closed behind him she threw out her arms with a tragic gesture, and her face was so changed and distorted by her anguish that its beauty was gone.

"Oh, love! love! good-bye! good-bye!" she moaned; and then, as though she could not bear the gloom and silence of the room, she fled into the sweet, still night, whose calmness seemed to mock at the storm within her breast.

Up and down her favourite terrace she walked, a white-robed, ghostly figure, never resting a moment until fatigue compelled her.

She did not guess how late it was, until her father's voice spoke her name, and in turning to reply, she found herself confronted by Frank.

"I've just walked up with your father, Miss Dancourt; and, seeing you here, lingered for a word."

Sir Humphrey was still moving away from them; and, seeing how changed and wan was her face, the young man leant over her.

"What has gone wrong? You poor darling, what is troubling you?"

## CHAPTER V.

THE kindness and love in his voice broke down her self-control.

A piteous little sob rose to her lips as in a flash she saw all that she would renounce in renouncing this man's devotion.

To see her in tears—she who was always so strong and proud—was to scatter all Frank's remaining prudence to the winds.

"Sweetheart! sweetheart!" he whispered. "Can't you trust me? Don't you know that I love you better than life itself?"

And then, after a hurried glance in Sir Humphrey's direction, he had her safe in his arms, and was kissing the pale lips passionately.

Just a moment she rested in his embrace as they stood in the darkest shadows of the trees; just a moment she gave herself up to this new, wild joy, and listened to his voice pleading—

"You do love me a little, darling? Let me hear you say that once before I go."

Then her father called to her—

"Dagmar! it is late. Come in now, child!"

That dispelled her dream—her new-found, perilous bliss, and she tried to tear herself away from her impetuous lover, but he held her fast.

"Only say it, sweetheart, and I will let you go! Say you love me!"

"Heaven pity me! I do!" she wailed.

And then, before he could stay her, she twisted herself out of his arms, and fled through the gathering darkness.

Frank walked home not ill-contented. Her wild cry of "Heaven pity me!" caused him no serious anxiety. He concluded that she feared her father's opposition to his suit, and thought—

"But the governor will smooth all difficulties out of my way. He can afford to be generous, and he will. My darling shall never feel the sting of poverty again!"

He would hardly have slept so soundly and peacefully had he known the cruel truth, could he have seen that white-robed, prestrate figure writhing in its lonely agony.

But he was blissfully unconscious of this and all that lay before him; and when he rose in the morning his heart was light as a child's.

He was eating his early breakfast with infinite relish, when Truffles entered with a telegram.

"For you, sir. I hope it is not bad news."

He tore it open, and read—

"From Thomas Lennox to Frank Lennox."

"Meet me at King's Cross at 12.30 this morning. Am coming up from Southampton."

"Oh, no, Truffles; it is good news. My father has arrived in England. I must meet him in town to-day."

"Ain't it curious, sir, he knows where to find you?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Of course, he got my address from his bankers. I agreed to keep them acquainted with my whereabouts. But I've no time to lose if I am to be at King's Cross at 12.30. Just pack a few things into my valise, please."

"I hope we're not going to lose you, sir?"

"Not just yet. I shall be back in a few days, bringing my father with me, no doubt."

And, as Truffles hurried away, he sat down, and scribbled a few lines to Dagmar, explaining the reason for his hasty departure. And, his preparations being concluded, shook hands with the landlord, entrusting the note to him, and rushed off to the station, being barely in time to catch his train.

When his note was given Dagmar she was already engaged in writing him the explanation he deserved, and which she felt she could not give by word of mouth; but, thankful for this reprieve, she tore it into a thousand fragments; and, reading his assurance of love again and again, burst into a passion of weeping.

Her tears relieved her in a measure; and when she had done her best to remove the traces they left, she went downstairs to spend this heavy day as best she could, to call all her recent courage to the fore—she would need it all to meet Guthbert Cross, and play her bitter part.

Slowly the heavy hours wore by, and the servants noticed amongst themselves that "Miss Dagmar looked very pale and ill, that she had done so ever since she got that letter last night," and each opined their young lady liked the banker "just as much as she did a toad."

Sir Humphrey told her she was a dull companion, and declared young Lennox was selfish to go off in such a hurry, leaving him utterly without society, or amusement. Then she was left alone, and never at any time could she tell how she spent that wretched day. Evening came at last, and she sat in a deep window, waiting in sick anguish for her lover's coming; she hardly knew yet how she should meet him; sometimes she thought she would throw herself on his mercy, confess all, and ask for her release. But instinctively she felt that Guthbert Cross would not be generous, and that she would have hurled herself for naught—then *The Towers*—it would break her father's heart to lose this place now, when he had thought his position so assured. No, she must go through with her sacrifice to the bitter end.

Soon she saw Mr. Cross advancing slowly, and to save her life she could not advance a

step to meet him, but stood white and still at the open window waiting for him to join her, which he shortly did.

"You are looking ill," he said, his manner in no way betraying his great and passionate joy at seeing her. "What have you been doing to yourself?" and stooping he kissed her cheek.

A shiver stole over her, as she moved a little from him.

"I am very well," she said coldly; "have you had a pleasant holiday?"

"You forget, it was business took me away Dagmar."

"But surely the two may be combined, in such a place as Paris."

"I am not much of a pleasure-seeker, Dagmar; how have you amused yourself during our separation? Sarah says you have called but once at *The Cedars*."

"I have been otherwise engaged," she answered with averted face.

"As how?" he asked persistently; "usually you have much leisure time."

"Really Mr. Cross, I should have kept a diary for your especial benefit. I have yet to learn that all my actions are under your control."

"They will be shortly; and indeed I have already the right to control them. Is it true, that you have spent many hours in the society of that Australian adventurer; and with your father's consent?"

"Yes," and she was thankful that the gathering dusk hid her guilty flush; "but please remember Mr. Lennox is a gentleman."

"Is he?" Well, granting that, I still objected to any intercourse between you. Do you understand I will not permit you to see or speak with him again; that in this thing my will is absolute—that no man but myself shall claim your thoughts, your time, or your affection?"

She sat quite still, her hands fast locked, her head drooped; so much that the man beside her thought he had been unduly harsh, and wondered a little where was her pride.

"My darling," he said in a gentler voice than he had ever used to her, "my darling, am I hard? Then it is because I love you so madly, and I so fear to lose you. Dagmar, have you no word of welcome for me?"

She moved impatiently, and possessing of himself of her hands, he asked—

"Are you angry? Why are you so silent? Surely you do not regret foregoing your new friend's society?"

"I regret nothing," she answered, flushing into anger, "nothing except the folly which induced me to trust my happiness to one so unjust and arbitrary as yourself; and I utterly refuse to treat Mr. Lennox otherwise than courteously;" she rose as she spoke, and moved to a distant part of the room; but he followed her.

"Some men would be angry with you; but I am not. I am willing to make every allowance for your youth. It is natural you should like admiration and pleasure, and of the latter you shall have all you can desire. But I will have no lovers declared or undeclared haunting you. You are mine, and no bitter words of yours can cancel our bond."

"Say no more," she began, in a low, passionate voice, but the entrance of Sir Humphrey put an end to the dispute, and for the remainder of the evening she allowed her lover no chance of private speech.

That night Frank sat with his father, who had taken private apartments near the Strand, and he was talking eagerly.

"She's the best and dearest girl under the sun," he was saying, "her only fault is pride of race, and I believe she will forget even that for me. She is so beautiful, so gracious, that I can hardly understand yet that she is to be my mine."

"And her name? say it again, Frank, I have forgotten it."

"Dagmar Dancourt." I am afraid there'll be a great fuss made when Sir Humphrey knows the truth; he's bent on marrying her to



to some rich old fogey just to save that grand old place of his."

Mr. Lennox was silent a moment, and his face wore a very strange expression; but Frank was not looking at him, so he said, presently—

"Her husband then must be willing to clear The Towers, I think, you call it? How are you to manage that?"

"Why, father, I thought you would help me to do that? You know you insisted I should chase a lady, and I must obey you," smiling.

"I did not say an impecunious lady, Frank; and, although I am tolerably well-to-do, I am not at all disposed to go about the country clearing off mortgages, and setting distressed gentlemen upon their feet."

"Only tolerably well-to-do," repeated Frank, blantly, "then my chance is small."

"Not if the girl loves you," quickly; "if she does not, if her pride of race is greater than her affection let her go; she will never make you happy!"

"But father—"

"That is enough. I have nothing more to say on the subject, except this. Go down to Danecourt to-morrow, and put your fate to the test."

With that Frank had to rest content; and, rising early the next morning, he bade his father an affectionate good-bye, and left for Danecourt.

Arrived there, he asked for Miss Danecourt, only to be informed that she was out. He begged, writing materials, he scribbled these lines:—

"MR. DARLING.—Meet me at Eanford's Pool (where we first met), at 8.15 this evening. I have much of importance to say to you.—F. L."

This note was handed to Dagmar on her return from Danesford. She was to dine at The Cedars; but come what would she must see Frank to-night, if only to tell him all the truth, to beg his forgiveness, because she had been something less than candid with him.

So Miss Danecourt retired to her own room, complaining of a violent headache, which seemed only to increase as the day wore by.

She felt wretchedly ill indeed before the appointed hour arrived. Her face was blanched, her eyes heavy, with dark circles about them.

Sir Humphrey was too concerned to ask any questions, and drove off alone somewhat reluctantly, and at last Dagmar was free.

It was a sure sign of misery that she was utterly careless of her toilet—a most unprecedented event with her. She was certainly not looking her best as she hurried through the garden, a gray shawl wrapped about her head and shoulders, her white dress all limp and tumbled.

But Frank was too happy to know these things when he saw her emerge from amongst the trees and bushes.

He hurried to meet her, his face radiant with love and happiness; he had no forebodings of evil now she was near; but when he looked into her eyes, when he saw how wan the lovely face had grown, a great dread fell upon him.

He drew her very near to him, but for awhile he did not speak, perhaps he could not, and she lay still in his embrace, wrestling with the terrible anguish possessing her soul.

"Well, Dagmar," he said, at length, and with hidden face, she cried,—

"It is not well; oh, my love, my love, can you forgive me? Will you try very hard to forgive me, the wretchedest woman on earth?"

"What have you done that needs forgiveness, sweetheart? Why are your pretty eyes all dimmed with tears? Have you been suffering because of me, you poor darling? Well, it is all over, and we are going to be happy in spite of them all. Dagmar, darling Dagmar, my father is waiting for his daughter!"

She wrung her hands in helpless, hopeless agony, and, despite his efforts to keep her near, wrested herself from him.

"Go back to him, Frank—my Frank, and tell him she is never coming; that she is a wicked woman, who has stolen his boy's heart, but tell him, too, she suffers. Oh, Heaven! she suffers too—forgive me, forgive me. I was not free even when we met first."

And leaning against a tree, she hid her face upon her arm, and waited for him to speak.

## CHAPTER VI.

He stood looking blankly down upon her, not understanding at first what her wild words meant; but as the truth dawned upon him, his face changed and hardened, and his voice was very stern as he said,—

"Do you mean you have wilfully and wantonly deceived me all along?"

"No, no. I never thought how it would be. I never guessed—perhaps I would not—and I gave up my freedom the very day we met."

"And why, if you had no love for this man, did you give yourself to him? Why have you been so silent concerning your engagement?"

"At first," she said, in a choking voice, "I thought there was no need to tell you anything, you were an utter stranger—and then—and then—gradually I grew to care for you, he was away, and I—I longed so for a little happiness."

His face softened somewhat as the piteous voice died out, and he drew a little nearer.

"You have not told me yet what led to your engagement."

"My father wished it, and he is very rich and generous."

"And you valued wealth so highly?" in a tone of infinite pity.

"I wanted to save The Towers, and Mr. Cross had promised to free it of all mortgages and encumbrances. I—I—oh! Frank, I will tell you all the truth. I was in a hurry to be wealthy. I hated poverty, and was willing—oh! not only willing, but determined to sacrifice everything that was best and noblest in me to my passion for luxury and power."

Where was her pride when she could make such confession of her faults and follies, broken down utterly and for ever by Love's Control; she was weak as the weakest of her sex.

"And now," he asked, "what will you do now?"

She lifted her passionate face to his.

"Tell me what to do, and I will do it; Frank, I can only obey you. Heaven knows I would willingly, gladly share your lot, toil with and for you, fare meanly, wear out my life in labour for you, if that might be. Oh! my love, my love! save me from myself and the fate I have worked out for myself!"

He had her in his arms now, and she knew, as his lips touched hers, how freely he forgave her, how fondly he loved her, despite her pride and folly; she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

With a touch as gentle as a woman's, he smoothed the heavy hair from her aching temples.

"There is only one thing to be done, sweetheart; you must make a clean breast of this to Mr. Cross, and ask for your release. He can but grant it!"

"He never will. Oh! you do not know him!"

"He is a poor sort of fellow, who is willing to hold a woman to him against her wish, who would marry her, knowing that she has no love for him? And I say, that having in some measure turned against him, you must repair the wrong at once; and I will see your father. Keep a brave heart Dagmar, we shall weather the storm."

He spoke more hopefully than he felt, and instinctively the girl knew this.

"We shall never come together. We may never again meet as we do now," she weiled, "dear heart; I will do your bidding, but I know it will be vain labour, and so to-night—

just now, when we are parting, kiss me, and tell me you forgive me,—then let me go away to the misery which is of my own working!"

"I will not lightly let you go," he answered, pressing her close, "and if you love me truly you will not be afraid to give up all for me."

"But my father! It would break his heart to lose The Towers!"

"Hearts are not easily broken; and better one should suffer than three lives be spoiled. What joy do you think your husband would have in you? What good would remain to me? What peace and content to you? Dagmar, for Heaven's sake, be true to yourself."

"It is harder than you think; but if I should ask my freedom and he refuse, what then? Can I honourably break my word?"

"Do not tempt me," he said, with the first sign of weakness she ever had or ever was to see in him. "You don't know what this means for me. You must let your conscience be your guide. I dare say no more."

She clung about him in a paroxysm of passion and pain, crying out that she loved him more than life; that she was a wicked woman who craved the pardon he might well deny her; that come what would she should love him to the end, bless his name with her last breath.

And he held her fast, speaking little, lest his shaken voice should tell her how much he was bearing, how cruelly she was trying him; and when she had grown quieter, he lifted the lovely, tortured face between his hands, and looking into the dusky eyes, said,—

"This is cruel to both, my darling; let us say good-bye to night—now, hoping that the morrow will bring us comfort and joy."

She sighed. It was so hard to part, but it was wise; she looked wistfully round on the fair and peaceful scene, which must always remain indelibly impressed upon her memory—the bending trees, the tall rushes rising out of the placid stream, and "the day dying out on the crest of the hill"; all these things she must remember together with her misery, until her dying hour.

"I am going," she said at last; "and I will do as you wish. I will ask for my release. Should I be so blessed as to obtain it, I will write you to-morrow; if not, let there be silence between us now and ever. It will be then my duty to forget you. Good-bye, Frank! good-bye!"

She slipped from his embrace then, and he did not seek to stay her.

He was not infallible, and the sight of her anguish was fast making him forget the claim Cross had upon her. So in silence they parted; and he watched her white-robed figure moving swiftly amongst the trees and bushes until he could see her no longer; then he went slowly and heavily home.

How Dagmar spent the night, she could not tell. She lay tossing to and fro, unable to sleep, unable to think in any clear fashion; and she was glad when the day dawned. She was so many hours nearer knowing her fate, and anything was better than this suspense.

She rose early, and breakfasted alone, that is, made a pretence of eating. Then Sir Humphrey came down, and, seeing how white and wan she was, begged she would consult the family doctor, but she shook her head with a pitiful smile; and, thinking that it might be she should soon grieve him greatly, kissed him with such warmth, such tenderness, he was astonished and gratified alike.

Still later Mr. Cross arrived, bearing a bouquet of choicest flowers, and expressing his concern, in his stiff, grave way, at her indisposition.

"It is nothing," she said, impatiently. "I am never really ill." Then, abruptly, "I shall be glad if you will walk with me; I wish to say something to you that I can say better out of doors than here. Will you come?"

He was only too glad. She had never before professed such a request, and he had no idea of what was before him. He never thought she would hesitate to marry him, knowing

that The Towers was dearer to her almost than life itself; and he waited patiently whilst she went to dress.

Her toilet occupied very little time, and she joined him presently, looking very beautiful in her perfectly fitting blue cotton gown, and a broad white hat, which had seen long service, but was eminently becoming to the face it shadowed.

"We will go through the meadows," she said, without glancing at him. "It will be pleasant under the trees."

So they passed out together through the old, luxuriant gardens, where Dagmar idly gathered a few carnations, with which she toyed as she walked; and the man beside her, looking down upon her, exalted that such beauty was his very own.

The walk promised to be a silent one. Cuthbert Cross was never given to much speech, and Dagmar was debating in her own mind how to broach the subject so near her heart.

All her tact seemed to have deserted her in this hour of need, and finally she burst out desperately,—

"Mr. Cross, I have been thinking I wronged you when I agreed to become your wife, because—because, you see, I have no love to give you!"

He winced a little, but answered in his ordinary manner,—

"There is no wrong done. I am well aware that you give me no affection; but I am certain I can win it in time, and I am content to wait."

"But—but if I assured you I never could love you, that in promising all I did I thought only of The Towers, and how to save it?"

"I should still hold you to your promise, I was never blind to the motive of your acceptance. I was never vain enough to think my 'personal charms' (this with a bitter sneer) could win any woman's regard, more especially that of a young and lovely woman. Suppose we speak of other things?"

"No!" firmly now, because so much was at stake. "Let me finish all I came out to say. Mr. Cross, the thought of such a marriage has become loathsome to me! Let me confess all the truth. My heart has gone wholly beyond my keeping. I ask you now to give me back my freedom, to forgive me the wrong I have done you?"

"Stop!" he said, in a strange, hard voice. "Who is this man for whom you have forgotten the duty due to me? Do I know him?"

"By report, yes," she answered, the hot blood flushing her face.

"Then it is Lennox, this Australian adventurer, who has probably left a wife behind, who is making you the sport of his idle hours. You do well, Miss Danecourt, to forget the traditions of your race—the honourable name of which you are guardian!"

"I deserve many harsh words from you," she said, humbly. "I have greatly wronged you; but please remember I will hear no word against Mr. Lennox. He is an honourable gentleman!"

"Has this honourable gentleman spoken to you of his attachment to you?"

"Yes," she said, desperately, "but he believed me to be free. I had never spoken of you to him."

"You mean you were ashamed of me, that you repented your bargain? May I ask if Sir Humphrey has been taken into your confidence?"

"He has not!"

"He will be hardly pleased with the turn affairs have taken. And may I ask what reply you made to my rival?"

"I told him I would ask you to free me, to cancel my promise; but that if you held me to it, in honour I was bound to marry you."

"Very well; I hold you to it," and there was hardly any change in his face or voice; but she knew him to be implacable, and trembled for herself and Frank. Still she

would make one further appeal, laying her hand on the man's arm, she said,—

"Please listen to me, patiently. If you compel me to fulfil my promise, I shall make no outcry, I shall even try to do my duty towards you; but I warn you that I shall never forget him, or love him less; that all my wretched life long, I shall remember him regretfully, and shrink from you, whose selfishness spoiled all my days."

He heard her in silence, but when she ended he broke out so violently that she was startled.

"Say what you will, and do not spare my feelings; but I tell you all your pleading is useless. If you loathed me a thousand times more than now you do, I would still marry you. I love you, I love you! Do you hear girl? And what can this fellow know of passion such as mine? Against your will, I will hold you mine; against your will I shall win your heart! Write your lover that I shall never forego my claim, that you dare not break your bond, because that would mean ruin for you and yours—the utter loss of The Towers."

She looked steadily into his eyes then, and said coldly,—

"Pray communicate this intelligence to Mr. Lennox. I have vowed to have no further correspondence with him, and remember whatever evil comes of this lies at your door, not mine."

She would have turned away but he caught and held her.

"You cold and beautiful darling!" he said, in a voice made hoarse by passion. "You shall yet learn to love me, even as I love you;" he held her so fast to his breast, whilst he rained kisses upon the sweet lips and fair brow, that she could neither struggle nor cry out; and when he had satisfied the long, long, hunger of months and years, and set her free, she covered her face with her hands and wept piteously. How could he so insult her, she who was so entirely and irrevocably Frank's? And Frank waited in alternate hope and fear for some tidings from her, but none came, and in the morning he returned to London and Mr. Lennox.

## CHAPTER VII.

"And you mean to tell me, Frank, that you will let this poor girl go to certain misery without an attempt to save her?"

"What else can I do in honour, father? Do you think I do it willingly?"

"I think you are a stupid young jackanapes! What does this fellow Cross know of honour or mercy, or any other manly feeling? Nothing! What sort of life do you think Miss Danecourt will lead as his wife? I know the fellow! Oh! yes Master Frank, stare if you will, but it is true; I knew him years ago when we were boys together, and he was always hard and merciless; strictly honourable in business relations he has proved himself, but there all praise of him ends. And, I tell you candidly, if you let this poor girl, fulfil her contract, you will have helped materially to work her misery."

"Father!" the cry broke from him involuntarily, his handsome young face grew ashen, and his lips quivered a moment; but recovering himself instantly, he said, "Tell me, what you would do under the circumstances?"

"Marry the girl without delay; explain all to her father afterwards."

"Would you give that advice to a man who would marry a daughter of yours without your consent?" said Frank, slyly.

"Of course I should; but Heaven saw fit to bless me with only one child, a raw, troublesome youth, with neither brains nor beauty to speak of!"

But Frank was not listening, and watching his haggard face, the older man's grew graver; and presently he said.

"Look here, my boy, I think you had better leave the management of this affair to me. I will go down to The Towers and interview Miss Danecourt, will show her the case in all its bearings, and plead your cause far better than you could plead it yourself. If I am successful you must make preparations for a speedy wedding; let me see, the girl is of age in something less than a fortnight?"

"How did you know that father?" asked Frank, surprised.

"You must have told me, my boy," answered the other coolly, as he loaded and lit his pipe. "You've been in such a state of worry since your return, that you don't know what you have said or left unsaid. Well, it is decided I go down to her to-morrow?"

"Yes; but father, I am quite sure I never told you her age."

"Then I have guessed it," composedly. "Have you any message, Frank?"

"None, we determined to preserve strict silence; but I am thinking what any rupture with Cross will mean for Sir Humphrey, it would kill him to lose The Towers."

"Fiddlesticks! and we shall find means to save the old place. I have a fancy to see you established as an English gentleman, and we can square Cross."

Frank shook his head.

"I am utterly hopeless; but you shall do as you wish, only don't be too certain of success. You are only laying up disappointment for yourself."

But Mr. Lennox smiled significantly. Apparently he had great faith in his own wisdom and plans.

"My boy, you know the old saying, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' Surely you won't give in without a struggle? And so far as I gather you have not attempted to win over Sir Humphrey. Surely his affection for his daughter would make him anxious for her happiness?"

"He thinks it is insured already; but I will write him if you wish."

Accordingly, the letter was written. Frank honestly and warmly declared his love for Dagmar, his ability to keep her in suitable style, his willingness to assist Sir Humphrey to the utmost of his power, and wound up with an entreaty that he would consider his daughter's future happiness above all things else—even his name and his ancestral home.

The letter was handed to Sir Humphrey as he sat drinking coffee the next morning, and the effect it had upon him was precisely opposite to what Frank could wish.

He inveighed furiously against the low adventurer who presumed to lift his eyes to a daughter of Danecourt, condemned himself for the gracious condescension with which he had treated Frank, and then emptied the vials of his wrath upon Dagmar's head.

She listened dumbly to his furious outbreak, making allowance for his disappointment, his pride of race; and when he paused for want of breath, said gently,—

"Dear, be kind to me, for my lot is a heavy one; and—and you are safe. Mr. Cross knows all, but will not release me. And if you love me, as I hope and believe you do, you will make your reply to Mr. Lennox courteous."

He made an angry rejoinder, but her words had weight with him, and the reply for which Frank waited and Mr. Lennox postponed his journey, though cold in the extreme, was not otherwise offensive.

"This settles the question, Frank," said his father. "I must be your ambassador, and the sooner I'm off the better."

That same night John Truffles was astonished to see a tall, handsome-looking man walk into his bar.

"It never rains but it pours," he thought, "and Mr. Lennox has brought me rare luck."

His astonishment was still further augmented when the stranger said,—

"My son has recommended me to spend a week or two at your comfortable inn. I would be glad if you could let me have his room."



"Mr. Lennox, senior, I presume, sir?" said John, with his best bow.

Mr. Lennox nodded, and the landlord led the way to the sitting-room Frank had recently occupied, talking garrulously.

"I hope we haven't seen the last of your son, sir? He's as fine and pleasant a young gentleman as ever we've had quartered here. My missis took an awful fancy to him—and so did Sir Humphrey, as no doubt he told you."

"Yes, yes, ah! He's a likely-looking lad, and a good lad too. But see here, Mr. Truffles, I'm as hungry as the proverbial hunter. What can you give me for supper?"

"There's some pickled salmon and a good out of ham in the larder, sir; and I've some excellent bottled ale."

"Let me have the salmon and ale, then, quickly, please."

John himself spread the snowy cloth, and waited assiduously on the visitor, now and then again stealing curious glances at him; and presently he said,—

"Bogging your pardon, sir, your face seems familiar-like to me; and it can't be because Mr. Frank's like you, for you're as different looking as you can be."

"Yes," said Mr. Lennox, composedly, "he is like his mother."

"I think I've never met you before?" insinuated John.

"I believe not. It is rather more than thirty years since I was here."

"That's a long time, sir; a good share out of a man's life. Ah! I've got it now. It's Sir Humphrey you're like—only you haven't his peevish look. Dear me, there's a wonderful likeness between you."

"I suppose I ought to feel flattered?" laughed Mr. Lennox. "I almost wonder my son did not mention the fact of my likeness to such a grandee," then he dismissed the man, and sat thinking while the stars came out in the pale grey sky and the light faded from the lovely earth, lingeringly slowly, as if loathe to depart.

His face was grave even to melancholy now, and once or twice he sighed heavily. Then he got up, and throwing wide the window, looked out and over to The Towers, and his eyes had grown reverent.

"The same, just the same!" he muttered. "There is no alteration there—the change is in me." He turned away with a sigh. "Well, well, it was all for the best, all for the best, and I must be content."

In the morning his cheerfulness had returned, and having breakfasted heartily, he went out, and towards the distant woods.

His mind was very busy with the question of Frank's happiness, and yet old memories, old hopes, old desires would come crowding in upon him; and once he spoke aloud,—

"Poor girl! poor girl! I wonder, would she have been happier with me away yonder, poor, pretty Therese?"

Then he stood still, and his heart beat a trifle faster, his eyes were less clear than usual, as a girl emerged from amongst the trees—a girl with a proud, pale face, from which all the light was gone, with eyes so like those eyes which ages ago had seemed to look love into his, and a crown of auburn hair, the like of which he had not seen these thirty years.

Lovelier than the lovely young mother she could not remember, Dagmar advanced, glancing indifferently at the waiting figure; and when she was near enough for speech Thomas Lennox advanced, hat in hand, and with a courtly bow, said,—

"Have I the honour to address Miss Danecourt?"

Wondering a little Dagmar answered in the affirmative, and he went on to say,—

"I am my son's ambassador. I have come to plead Frank's cause with you."

She started, and her pale face grew yet paler, as she said, hurriedly,—

"I cannot listen to you. I thought Mr. Lennox would understand my silence, and be

merciful to me; my weakness should have won so much pity for me."

"My dear," he answered, with grave tenderness, "it was my wish not his that I should come on this errand. I cannot think calmly of the wreck you are bent on making of his happiness and yours. Let us talk over the matter quietly, and see what can be done for you both."

"Oh! believe nothing can be done. Do not distress yourself and me by any useless arguments or entreaties."

Mr. Lennox took her hand, and leading her to the fallen trunk of an elm, sat down beside her.

"My dear," he said, gently, "you have got to listen to me, and remember that in all I say I have your welfare at heart. You love my Frank?"

The flash on her face answered him.

"Very well, that being granted, why will you send him away? Why are you so bent upon choosing misery when happiness is offered you? Dagmar, it is a terrible thing you contemplate, and can have but one result. This man you would marry, do you for an instant suppose he will patiently bear your coldness and disdain?"

"Do not urge these things upon me," she cried, distressfully. "I know I am binding myself to absolute pain. That nothing will be good for me any more; but it is my duty. I have promised."

"To break such a promise is less culpable than to keep it. Will you go to Heaven's altar with a lie on your lips, a lie in your heart. You are young to perjure yourself so terribly. Dear girl, nothing but love can make marriage happy—love so complete, so divine in its strength and tenderness that no time can change or chill it—no ill can touch it, unless it be to strengthen it; not even wrong can break it down; love that gives all generously, freely, not counting the cost, only craving a like love in return."

She lifted sweet, wet eyes to his.

"You speak kindly to me," she said, in a low voice, "and I know that all you say is true; but I know it too late."

"It is not too late," decisively, "it cannot be that so long as you are still Dagmar Danecourt. The time is yours now. What will you do with your life? Will you make or mar it?"

"What can I do?" in greatest grief and agitation. "Oa, my poor father!"

"He shall not suffer, I promise you so much."

"But The Towers? It would kill him to be driven out of his home."

"Neither shall The Towers be lost;" in a tone she could not doubt. "I do not say Frank is rich (a smile hovered about his lips then), but he and I have enough, I fancy, to free the old place, if you don't mind roughing it over yonder for a few years."

She was visibly wavering, and he pressed his advantage mercilessly until she said, hurriedly, and in a half-frightened way,—

"We are forgetting Mr. Cross, and you seem not to think how I shall tarnish the Danecourt honour by breaking so solemn a promise."

"Bother the 'Danecourt honour.' The world will get along very well without it. Of course, in good time, you would confess all to your elderly lover, and he must make the best of the case. What right had such an old fogey to dream of linking your young life to his?"

Mr. Lennox, desperately, "Are you quite sure that you will save my home?"

"On my honour, yes!"

"Then, oh! I am afraid I am doing wrong; but I cannot help myself, I—I so love Frank. Tell him that he may come to me, that—"

"That so far you have proved yourself a good girl; but you must go farther. You are not to suppose that Sir Humphrey will consent to your union, consequently, it must take place without his knowledge or sanction."

"Oh no, no! I could not so deceive him!"

"Very well; then you must reverse your message. No woman shall play fast and loose with my son, if I can help it. So soon as I was gone, your father and that fellow Cross would persuade, threaten, coerce; and you are but a woman—"

"I have given you my promise," proudly, "I will keep it!"

"It is a maxim of mine always 'to make assurance double sure,' and that with all haste. I have got to think of my son as well as for you, and from the following conditions I will not go. On the day after your birthday you are to walk to St. Mark's Church, Danesford, and there Frank and I will meet you. You are to take no one into your confidence; and when you are safely man and wife I will bring you back to your father, and he will not only forgive, but bless you."

In spite of her fears and doubts—in spite of her distress and opposition—Mr. Lennox clung to his conditions, and in the end he was victorious.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MANY, many times before her wedding day drew near, was Dagmar tempted to confess all to her father, and crave his pardon and consent to her marriage; but she knew well this would never be granted, and so refrained.

Frank returned to Danesford, thinking it wiser not to take up his quarters at John Truffles; but every night he contrived to meet Dagmar, and murmur such words of reassuring love, that her drooping spirits revived.

He much objected to the clandestine way in which the marriage would take place, but on this point Mr. Lennox was obdurate; he was bent upon testing the girl to the utmost.

The eventful morning dawned bright and beautiful, and Dagmar, dressing with trembling fingers, was a very pale bride indeed. She wore one of her plain white gowns, and an inexpensive bonnet with white ribbons, which in its simplicity was not suggestive of a wedding.

Unobserved she left the house, and walking rapidly through the grounds joined Mr. Lennox, who was looking wonderfully handsome and elate.

He drew her hand in his arm and spoke cheerfully to her, but she was beyond the power of speech, and so he left her in silence; in a little while they entered Danesford; the streets were yet quiet, the shops being for the most part unopened, and almost unobserved they entered St. Mark's.

The clergyman, who had known Dagmar from childhood, spoke a few words in a low tone to Mr. Lennox, who replied sharply,—

"Let her alone, it is all right; she is of age," and then the ceremony began, and Dagmar made the responses like one in a dream, hardly realising the enormity of the step she was taking.

When they adjourned to the vestry she signed her name in trembling characters; then the book was given first to the son, next the father; and as the clergyman's eyes rested on their signatures, he said,—

"I beg your pardon, you have made a mistake."

"Not at all," said Mr. Lennox, airily, and he followed Frank and his bride, leaving the good man staring in wonder at those three names,

Dagmar Danecourt,  
Frank Lennox Danecourt,  
Robert Thomas Danecourt.

"We will go to The Towers, dear wife," said Frank, "and make our peace with Sir Humphrey; what a surprise we shall give him."

"Not a pleasant one, I'm afraid," she answered, clinging about him. "Oh! Frank, you should love me very dearly, seeing what I have given up for you."

He pressed her little hand the closer, whilst Mr. Lennox indulged in a broad smile; his spirits seemed quite wonderful that morning,

and his merriment must have been infectious, for presently Frank paused in the middle of the road and laughed long and boisterously. Dagmar was both hurt and frightened, and looked reproachfully at him; surely he had not been drinking!

That look recalled him to his senses, and with a hasty incoherent, but wholly tender apology, he went on once more, and had no fresh attack of unseemly mirth until the trio were approaching the hall door.

"Let me go in first?" Dagmar pleaded. "Papa deserves much consideration, we have so deceived him—and—and Frank, dearest, if he should say hard things, we must not resent them, in time he will forgive. Now, dear, let me go!"

"But it seems cowardly to let you be the bearer of the news."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Lennox. "Dagmar is right, and we will wait outside the door; go, my dear, and look he with you."

Trembling she entered. Her father looked up, and was surprised to see her dressed for walking; then, as he caught the expression of her white face, a great fear fell on him, which was not lessened when she ran to him and throwing her arms about his neck, begged him to forgive her; imploring him, with streaming eyes not to leave her less, because not even her dear husband's love could make her life complete if his were lost.

With a great horror Sir Humphrey realised the truth, saw his home with all its fair lands given over to strangers, himself penniless, friendless, shelterless, and thrusting Dagmar away, he broke into a terrible denunciation of her and her husband.

But he had said very little when the door was flung violently open, and a strong, manly voice cried,—

"Humphrey!"

He wheeled round, and confronting Mr. Lennox, gasped,—

"Robert! I—I—we all believed you dead!" "Brother, have you no better welcome for me than this?" asked the other advancing to him. "Dagmar, my dear daughter, come here," and bewildered beyond measure she went to him, whilst Frank supported her on the other side.

"Brother Humphrey, you should be glad that I have saved your child from certain misery. You would have sold her to save this place, as though her soul, and her young, sweet life, were not of more value than it; but by her marriage with my son she has won happiness and her home too."

"But—I do not understand," said Dagmar, confusedly, whilst Sir Humphrey was silent from stupefaction.

"Probably not, my love! and, to make it clear, I will tell you my story. But first let me absolve Frank of all share of this innocent deception. Until last night he believed himself Frank Lennox, a simple Colonial with no claim to birth or breeding."

"Humphrey, when you robbed me of my fiancée, I could remain in England no longer, and, as you well know, started for Australia, from which country I wrote you twice or thrice. But I knew how you longed for my empty title, how much she wished it yours; and when a report of my death was circulated, I did not contradict it; rather, I endeavoured to confirm it still further."

"You were only too glad to believe in it; and so you entered upon possession; but I never lost sight of you. I followed the wretched fortunes of our house step by step. I knew the date of your first son's birth. I wondered much what was before him."

"Then chance threw me in the society of a young and beautiful Scotch girl. She was poor and friendless, so was I; and, being weary of my lonely life, I married her. But she died young, leaving me only this legacy," and here he touched his son lightly.

"I was troubled, then, as to my duty towards him. He was heir to an ancient name and a fine estate."

"Was it well to rear him in ignorance of

these things? I could not decide satisfactorily; and, meanwhile, I moved further up the country; and at that time adopted my wife's family name."

"Then things began to prosper with me. My boy grew and thrived, was so happy in our way of life, that I did not like the idea of transplanting him."

"I began to grow rich. Everything I touched turned to money; and I often thought of writing you of my prosperity; but she was dead, the title was yours, and I was happy enough—at least, as happy as a man dare hope to be."

"So things went on until my boy was a fine-grown young fellow. And when he expressed a wish to visit the old country, I was willing he should come."

"I earnestly impressed upon him my desire that he should visit The Towers; and I think I half hoped he would meet his cousin, and a mutual attachment would spring up."

"And when he had gone, the place was so horribly lonely, I followed him on here."

"Then came the story of his love. I might have spared him pain. I might have simplified matters at once, but I wanted to test your daughter. I wanted to know which was the greater with her—her love for my lad, or the confounded Danecourt pride."

"And the love conquered!" Frank said, joyously. "Usele, will you shake hands with me? You know I was always a favourite with you."

Humphrey Danecourt offered his hand in a dazed way.

"It is all—very wonderful! but I—I don't see how I am benefited by—by this change of husbands."

"Don't you?" remarked his brother.

"Let me tell you, then. The Towers will be freed from encumbrances, and much of the old state revived. The title, my dear boy, I am sorry to say, must fall on me; but you're welcome to it. I shall return to Australia to settle my affairs; and then, as separation from Frank is not to be thought of, I shall come back like the proverbial penny, and settle here with you and the young people. How will that suit? Dagmar, my dear, I hope you are satisfied?"

She made him no answer; but, turning to her happy young husband, hid her blushing, radiant face upon his breast.

"Frank! Frank!" she whispered, "can you ever forget my pride? I thought I was sacrificing so much, when it was you who gave all! Husband! dear husband! how much I will try to repay you for all your generous goodness!"

"Don't talk like that, sweetheart! Have you not given me yourself, the richest and greatest boon on earth? And now you have nothing to do but to love me always as you do now! What a chapped and humble darling you have grown!" holding her from him, the better to see her face.

She laughed.

"The change has been made by Love's Control! Dear papa, you forgive me now?"

The wedding tour occupied a considerable time, the young people travelling with Sir Robert to Australia; Humphrey Danecourt formed one of the little party, too.

He was glad to get away from England for awhile, not caring to face Cuthbert Cross in his rage and disappointment.

The traveler was like one gone mad when he found his prey had escaped him; and Miss Sarah did not find living with him pleasant in those days.

But before the return of the Danecourts he contracted diphtheria, which ended fatally in less than forty-eight hours; so that, when Dagmar re-entered her home, there was not one drop of bitterness in her over-flowing cup.

Years came and went, bringing happiness along with them; and, relieved from his pressing pecuniary troubles, Humphrey seemed to grow young again. And when

Dagmar's children could run about the grey terraces and pleasant walks, he and Sir Robert vied to spoil the youngsters.

As for Dagmar, as she looks into her husband's handsome, happy face, she can but thank Heaven that she bowed herself to Love's Control.

[THE END.]

## FACETIE.

WHEN a man's coat is getting a little old it may be turned. The older his brain is the less excuse there is for its being turned.

"Why, what's the matter this morning, Tom?" "Caught a cold; that's all." "Yes, I saw you after one last night, with your coat off; I thought you'd catch it."

IN MEMORIAM.—Sick Husband: "Will you see that my grave is kept green?" Wife: "Yes, indeed, love; I'll have you buried in the Evergreen Cemetery, where they make a specialty of keeping graves green without extra charge."

MEN OF FEW WORDS.—Jolly fellow (after an absence): "Hello, Meak! Married yet?" Meak (sadly): "No; not married yet." Jolly fellow (after another absence): "Hello, Meak! Married yet?" Meak (sadly): "Yes; married yet."

A RED-LETTER DAY.—Shaver: "Why are those girls so merry?" Native: "They belong to the Conservatory of Music, and it has just been announced that the man who writes the 'Forlorn Hope Ten-Finger Exercise' is dead."

POLITICS V. LETTERS.—First Little Girl: "My pa is a great councilman, and gives contracts for sewers and things. Everybody has heard of him." Second Little Girl: "My pa is an editorial writer on a great newspaper, and helps to make history. Everybody will hear of him when he dies."

CAUSE FOR ANXIETY.—Car-wheel Manufacturer (passenger in fast express train which is stopping a long time): "What are you striking those wheels for?" Man with hammer: "To see if they are sound yet." Car-wheel Manufacturer (nervously): "Well, please don't hit 'em quite so hard."

NO GREAT ADVANTAGE.—Mr. Highfive (looking up from the paper): "Well, well! wonders will never cease! They've got so now that they can photograph in colors." Mrs. Highfive (glancing at his nose): "I think, my dear, you'd better get your picture taken before the old process is abandoned."

A MORNING SALE.—Chemist: "Ah! Good morning, Mr. Oldpatron. Haven't seen you since you went to housekeeping." Mr. Oldpatron: "No. Have you any more of that Digestive Enforcer you used to sell me?" "Yes, sir. How much?" "I want about a quart." "Yes, sir. Gone back to boarding, I presume."

PROFESSIONAL COURTESIES.—Actor (in country town): "I hope you won't object to announcing in your paper that this will probably be the last chance to see me outside of the great cities, as I have received an offer from the Lyceum Theatre for next season at £100 a week." Editor: "I'll print it with pleasure. And, by the way, please announce from the stage that now is the time to subscribe for the *Eastonville Trumpet*, as I have received an offer of £1,000 a week to run the *London Times*."

A QUEER FAMILY.—According to a new item, two young men recently fought a duel for the hand of a young lady, and as neither was wounded, the girl refused to have either, saying that "she didn't want a man who couldn't hit a barn in his family." Whereupon one of the young men said if he had known that "she had a barn in her family," and wanted it hit, he wouldn't have fought a duel for her, because a barn in the family is as much out of place as a family in the barn.



## SOCIETY.

THE Queen has signified her intention of paying a short visit to Wales on the 22nd of August when on her way north. The arrangements have not yet been completed, but it is expected that Her Majesty during her stay in the Principality, will occupy Pale, the Welsh seat of Mr. H. B. Robertson. Pale is situated on the Dee, not far from the Lake of Bala, and is as retired in position as even our solitude-loving Monarch could desire.

As for the flowers last Drawing Room, says *Modern Society*, it really would take a poet or a painter to find words to do them justice! Such roses, of every shade, from deep crimson, radiant pink, and golden yellow, to purest white; such dainty knots of forget-me-nots, pansies, marguerites, or lilacs, mixed with waving grasses and leaves of freshest green; and such triumphs of costly horticulture in crotches, azaleas, and pelargoniums! They were a sight worth going out to see, by themselves!

The Prince of Wales, it is reported, has been persuaded by the Marquis of Hartington to visit the noted Derbyshire health resort, Buxton, in the course of the summer, and His Royal Highness will be the guest of the aged Duke of Devonshire at his princely mansion at Chatsworth. Should the rumour prove true, the Prince will have an opportunity of comparing the scenery and air of the Peak county with those of Homburg, which he has helped so much to bolster up. It will be a happy thing for our home-care places if this new departure of the Royalties be followed by a greater recognition of their virtues.

WINNIE is looking forward eagerly to the return of Princess Christian to Cumberland Lodge, this month. Her Royal Highness is a great deal better, and was able to enjoy the celebration of her eldest daughter's twentieth birthday, at Homburg; where the Empress Frederick took care that it should be a day of rejoicing for her niece and namesake, and the bright May weather made the Taunus country delightful.

An exhibition of historic gloves was opened a few days ago in Paris. It contains gloves from the time of the Romans, as well as ancient French and English gloves. Among the latter are to be found three pairs which were worn by Queen Elizabeth, and these show that good Queen Bess had a hand like a powerful man. To judge from this exhibition, it appears that small hands belong to modern times, at least, all gloves of former periods are of unusual size. The largest and smallest modern glove worn by living crowned ladies attract special attention. The fortunate possessor of the smallest hands among Royal ladies of the present day is the Queen Regent of Spain.

MISS DALLAS YORKER has had the advantage of consulting the Princess of Wales personally on the arrangements for her approaching marriage with the Duke of Portland. There is no doubt that the wedding will be the event of the season, and already there is desperate intriguery to obtain a ticket for the ceremony. Both the Prince and Princess of Wales have promised to be present; together with other members of the Royal Family, and the event has brought consolation to the heart of many a West-end modiste whose views of the prospects of the season were anything but pleasant.

The Empress Frederick and her daughters are often to be seen in the streets of Homburg, when out shopping. The weather is exceedingly mild and fine, and the Royal party frequently undertake long walks or drives to the neighbouring woods, to the latter of which Princess Victoria distinguishes herself by driving a splendid four-in-hand of black horses from the Royal stud with great dexterity, whereas the younger Princesses follow in a pony-carriage.

## STATISTICS.

THE best cutting timber from an oak comes at the age of 150 years. After this the tree rots at the core faster than it grows outside. There are 280 kinds of oak in the world.

It has just been discovered that out of 25,000 native Kanakas in the island of Noumea, 4,000 are afflicted with leprosy of the worst sort. Efforts to stop the scourge are under way.

AUSTRALIA has just made to a projected railway a grant of 16,000,000 acres, or 20,000 acres a mile. The grant to the Pacific railway in the United States amounted to about 6,400 acres a mile.

THE first oil well was bored less than thirty years ago; the present annual production in America and Russia is 2,000,000,000 gallons, which goes through 7,000 miles of pipe lines, employs a fleet of 150 tank steamers, and has displaced coal on nearly 1,000 locomotives and steamers.

THE postal telegraph system in England is operated at a continual loss. Last year the receipts were £6,000 less than expenses, and there was, besides, the interests on eighty millions of investment to pay. Since 1872 the net loss upon the telegraph department of the post office has been over £8,800,000.

## GEMS.

IN learning anything, as little as possible should be proposed to the mind first.

AFFLICTION is the school of virtue; it corrects levity, and interrupts the confidence of sinning.

A MAN must be excessively stupid, as well as uncharitable, who believes there is no virtue but on his own side.

IT is sufficiently humiliating to our nature to reflect that our knowledge is but as a rivulet, our ignorance as the sea.

IGNORANCE, with indifference for truth, is nearer to it than opinion with ungrounded inclination, which is the great source of error.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BEEF PATTIES may be made of cold meat, by mincing and seasoning beef as directed above, and baking in a rich puff paste in patty-tins.

LEMON PUDDING.—Six ounces of melted butter; pour it over the same quantity of sugar; stir it well until cold. Grate the rind of a large lemon, and add to it eight eggs well beaten, and the juice of two lemons; stir all together, and bake with puff paste around edges of dish.

BEEF ROLLS.—Mince the remains of some cold roast or boiled beef tolerably fine, with a small amount of its own fat; add a seasoning of pepper, salt, and chopped herbs; put the whole into a roll of puff paste, and bake for half an hour, or rather longer should the roll be very large.

CINNAMON RUSKS.—One cup of mashed potatoes, one of hop yeast, and three eggs. Mix all together. When light add half a cup of butter, one tablespoonful of ground cinnamon, and flour to make a stiff dough. Let it rise, make it into small cakes, and put in buttered pans. When light grease the tops with butter, sprinkle thickly with sugar and cinnamon. Bake in a quick oven.

ROLLED JELLY CAKE.—One cup of sugar and two eggs well beaten together. Then add two tablespoonfuls of water. Mix one and a half teaspoonful of baking powder with one and a half cups flour, add this to the eggs and sugar. Do not stir much after adding flour. Flavour with teaspoonful lemon or vanilla; bake in a dripping-pan in a quick oven; when cool spread on the jelly, and roll it. It is nice baked in jelly tins.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

ACTION and self-renunciation lead alike to happiness; for he who either acts or denies himself reaps the harvests of both virtues. Right action, undertaken heedless of consequences, is indeed renunciation.

IN a troubled state, we must do as in foul weather upon the Thames, not think to cut directly through, so that the boat may be quickly full of water, but rise and fall, as the waves do, and give as much as we conveniently can.

AS I was at my window, says a modern writer, I saw the stars, and that vast firmament in which the Lord had placed them. I could nowhere discover the columns on which the Master had supported this immense vault, and yet the heavens did not fall.

A SMOOTH sea never made a shifful mariner, neither do uninterrupted prosperity and success qualify one for usefulness and happiness. The storms of adversity, like those of the ocean, arouse the faculties and excite the invention, prudence, skill, and fortitude of the voyager. The martyrs of ancient times, in bracing their minds to outward calamities, acquired a loftiness of purpose and a moral heroism worth a lifetime of softness and security.

ANY woman who does not carry a halo of good feeling and desire to make everybody contented about her wherever she goes—an atmosphere of grace, mercy, and peace, of at least six feet radius, which wraps every human being upon whom she voluntarily bestows her presence, and so flatters him with the comfortable thought that she is rather glad he is alive than otherwise, isn't worth the trouble of talking to, as a woman; she may do well enough to hold discussions with.

BUYING SLAVES in Morocco.—We often visited the slave-market, which is, I think, the most interesting sight in Morocco. We had all read the fearful accounts, which the press of Tangier is so fond of repeating, of the terrible doings of slavery in Morocco, and I must confess were most pleasantly surprised. We went very often to the market, but never saw such sights as children separated from their parents, though we saw them sold together in the "lot." Nor did we see many other things of which we have read. In fact, the slaves were a wonderfully contented, even cheerful, expression while the sale was proceeding. We were much amused at watching one young woman—who, by the way, was rather handsome—alter her expression from sulkiness when an old Moor was looking at her, to cheerfulness when a handsome young man began his inspection. So there is coyness even in the wild deserts from which these slaves come. In fact, far from being a painful sight, we found it rather amusing than otherwise, and I do not know that we are more hard-hearted than the generality of mankind. This I will say, that I would far rather be a slave in Morocco than a peasant. From what, too, I saw of slaves out of the market they appear not to have such a bad time of it, and in many houses enjoy more liberty than paid servants. Of course there is truth in many of the fearful stories we hear of ill-treatment, but, again, I know an old Moor upon whose death all the property goes by will to his slaves. It is not slavery that is so bad; it is the kidnapping that slavery necessitates and the terribly long journey over the scorching desert; but, of course, to put down this kidnapping we must aim at slavery direct. The market is mostly supplied from the Soudan—not the Soudan as we call Nubia, but the Soudan that lies south of the Sahara and east of Senegambia, an enormous district of sand—but it is not at all an uncommon sight to see white slaves in the market, Moors and Arabs. The prices average from 3 to 4 pounds a head for all varieties, though we saw one elderly female knocked down for about twelve shillings, much to her disgust.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. BINGHAM.—1. Externally. 2. It is quite immaterial.

T. A. H.—A new German process is stated to be effectual, but it is very expensive. There is no simple method.

A LOVER OF THE READER.—1. It is torn up. 2. "My Lady's Lovers" appeared in Nos. 955 to 969; 15 Nos. in all. Post free, 1s. 8d.

M. H. B.—We can only recommend the constant use of the tweezers. All depilatories are dangerous, and shaving leaves an unsightly blue mark in time.

A. G. C.—1. The fees amount to about ten shillings, and twenty-one days' notice must be given. 2. Seven days, and the fees amount to about two pounds seventeen shillings.

ELLIE.—1. Ask him plainly or write to him, and tell him you want to know what his intentions really are. 2. Golden Auburn. 3. Warts practice. 4. Amelia "beloved"; Adelaide, "purity"; Harry, "rich at home."

R. N. D.—We cannot countenance anything clandestine. Write to the girl frankly to her own home and see her parents. If you love her and want to marry her it must be known some day, and however secret you may wish to be you will be found out in time.

G. H. S.—An excellent remedy for preserving the hair, and preventing it from prematurely turning gray, is the following: Put some dried rose leaves into an earthenware pipkin, cover them with olive oil, and keep hot for some hours, both odour and colour will be extracted by the oil. Apply the oil to the hair.

DORA ALSTON.—1. The Princess Beatrice was married to Prince Henry of Battenberg on the 23rd of July, 1885. 2. Josephine is the feminine of Joseph, and means an addition, Lydia "a princess," Ellen "fruitful," Janet from John, "the beloved of the Lord," Charles "strong," Ralph "wise," Owen "well-descended." 3. Simply to wash them with cold soap and water.

F. L. W.—Undoubtedly it is good to read, mark, learn, but better to inwardly digest, better to think one hour than to read ten without thinking. Thinking is to reading (if the book has anything in it) what rain and sunshine are to seed cast into the ground. To read is to collect information, to think is to bring forth the power to gain that information.

MAOGIE.—1. Tied with white-drab, tied with brown, hazel, tied with black dark brown. 2. Gladys is the Welsh form of Glendia, a Roman proper name; Emily means beloved, Hamletia, from Henry, a rich lord. 3. Safety and fidelity. 4. We wish we could. We don't believe there is any. Perhaps the child will grow out of the habit. Do not let it lie on its back more than you can help.

G. C. S.—The sulphur and water, for the eradication of dandruff, may be kept in a bottle in the proportions of one teaspoonful of sulphur to one pint of water. Wash the head with it about twice a week, and rinse off with clear water. If the hair be dry after using the sulphur and water, use castor oil and brandy in the proportions of three ounces of oil to one ounce of brandy.

UNLOVED ONE.—Your husband probably is suffering from extreme debility. Let him go to a hospital at once. He probably requires plenty of milk (say a quart and a half a day) and nourishing food. Cod-liver oil is an excellent thing in all wasting disorders, and can certainly do him no harm. 2. The cheapest by far and most effectual is to send it to a dyers. 3. It is a difficult question as the nature of the illness is not stated, but it would be wise to consult an eminent physician, who, if you represented your circumstances, would probably see you for a guinea.

V. S. D.—1. The "Little Man of Galilee" was Zachariah, a rich Jew, a resident of Jericho, and chief officer of the tax or tribute collector in that place. He was very small in stature, hence the name given him. In an interview with our Saviour he was brought under the influence of His teachings, and he and his family were converted to Christianity. It was Zachariah who said, after his conversion, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." 2. See Luke, chapter xix, verse 3.

G. P.—1. The climate of Manitoba, Canada, is very cold in winter, but is occasionally hot in summer. The severity of the winter weather is mitigated by a clear, dry atmosphere. 2. Winnipeg is the capital of the province, which is well supplied with educational institutions. It has three colleges—St. John's (Church of England), St. Boniface (Roman Catholic), and Kildonan (Presbyterian)—a convent, and many common and parish schools. Every bond fide settler receives a homestead or a free grant of 160 acres of land. All kinds of garden vegetables, as well as cereals, are easily raised.

P. T. H.—The "Pilgrim's Progress" was written by John Bunyan during his twelve years' imprisonment in gaol at Bedford, to which he was sent for preaching in disagreement with the views of the Established Church. His book, as is well known, has had an immense sale. He wrote other works; among them, "One Thing is Needful" and "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners." He was brought up in the trade of his father, who was a brasser or tinker. At the age of nineteen he married a religious wife, and at twenty-five joined the Baptist church at Bedford. On his discharge from gaol he renewed his preaching with marked success. He died in 1688, in the sixty-first year of his age.

D. C.—We suggest the purchase of a guide book for the purpose in view. We have not the space to spare for the many details desired.

AMY.—Opticians are generally preferred, because they make a study of the science of optics, and are regarded as more skilful than ordinary practitioners, though both may derive their knowledge from the same sources.

M. C. L.—To cook soft crabs, take off the claws, wash, wipe, and open them, and after removing the spongy part and sand bag, season inside and outside with salt and cayenne pepper; then close them, and fry in fresh butter until there is a light brown on both sides. Send to table hot.

D. T. H.—You are at liberty to break the engagement if you feel inclined to do so. A hasty and passionate temper is not a desirable gift, and its frequent exhibition towards yourself for trivial causes should admonish you of the danger to be encountered if you unite your fate with that of the young man referred to.

POOR LILLY.—If the attentions have been going on for any length of time it is the duty of her father or brother to ask him plainly, but civilly, what his intentions are, because it is manifestly unfair to the young lady to keep her dangling after him if he means nothing. It might spoil her of a chance of getting a good husband, especially if she is an attractive girl.

P. T. S.—The making of glass dates back to the earliest antiquity, and no trustworthy authority can be quoted as to whom the honour of the invention belongs. The oldest specimens are Egyptian, and it has been proved that these people had a knowledge of glass blowing 5,500 years ago. They also made glazed pottery at that early age in the world's history.

## THE WALL BETWEEN.

She wanders forth at the early day,  
Over the green and dewy way,

Seeking the climatic white as snow,  
Over the fences rambling low.

Young Colin, on the other side,  
Mows the meadow sweet and wide,

Stopping awhile his scythe to whet  
Near where the maiden lingers yet.

They talk of daisies and growing corn,  
Of the new-mown hay, on that dewy morn;

Then pausing, his face in a tender glow,  
She over the climatic bending low,

He speaks, she seeking his glance to shun:  
"Why may not our hearts and our fields be one?"

She softly answers: "How may that be?  
There's a wall between us, don't you see?"

He leaps the wall with a lithesome bound,  
His strong arms clasp the maiden round.

She whispers low, with blushing brow:  
"There is no wall between us now."

D. C. F.

F. N. S.—Like flakes of snow that fall unperceived, the apparently unimportant events of life succeed each other; as the snow gathers so are our habits formed. No one action creates, however it may exhibit, a man's character; but as a tempest may hurl an avalanche down a mountain and overwhelm the inhabitants and their dwellings, so passion, acting upon the elements of mischief, which bad habits have brought together imperceptibly, will and must overthrow the edifices of truth and virtue.

P. M. L.—1. In shape, Cuba, the largest of the West India group, is long, narrow, and slightly curved. The entire coast line is about 2,300 English miles. The approach to the shores is rendered difficult and dangerous by the reefs and shallows, which extend often from two to three miles into the sea. But though the coast is peculiar, Cuba has over two hundred ports, including sheltered landings. 2. Havana has one of the best harbours in the West Indies.

E. S. G.—There is nothing to a serious mind more soothing and consolatory than to look upon a village church on the summit of a sloping hill; its ivy-covered tower rising above everything else imparts the idea of a patriarch overlooking the village. What more pleasant than to hear the bells ringing forth their summons to enter! and, on approaching the porch, and listening to the swelling hymn, to think of the Saviour's glorious words, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

E. A. F.—The game of chess originated in India about five thousand years ago. In the first period of its history, the moves of the men were almost the same as in the present game, but it was played by four persons, and the combatants determined what place to move by the throw of a die. In the second period the game was reduced to a contest between two persons, and the element of chance was discarded. In the third, or modern period, some changes were made in the fundamental laws of the game, increasing the powers of the queen and bishop, and the introduction of castling. Alone among games its use has been sanctioned by the priesthood of all beliefs, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, and Moslem.

MAUD.—A widow wears her weeds for a year, and then goes into half mourning for another year.

PATTY.—1. It should be as near the lady's right hand as possible, and next to the tea-urn or teapot. The lady should sit while pouring tea. 2. It is correct to ask them to sit down. It is not at all necessary to rise on such occasions. 3. Very good.

WIFIE.—1. It should always be worn in the dressing-room and in the nursery, and may be worn in the morning generally till after breakfast. 2. It would be good enough if you would drop the affected habit of sloping it the wrong way. Please write separately another time.

W. E. G.—The first century began with the first day of the year 1. The second century began with the first day of the year 101. The nineteenth century began with the first day of the year 1801. The nineteenth century will close with the last day of the year 1900, and the twentieth century will begin with the first day of 1901.

V. D. A.—An excellent cement for mounting geological specimens is prepared by melting in an iron pot equal parts of common pitch and gutta-percha. It may be kept liquid under water, or solid, to be melted when wanted for use. It is not attacked by water, and adheres firmly to wood, stone, glass, porcelain, ivory, leather, woolen, cotton, and linen fabrics.

E. L. B.—There are so many freckle-removing remedies recommended by various authorities that it becomes a difficult matter to say which is the most efficacious. We have heard the following mixture spoken of in glowing terms of approval: Scrape home-ried into a cup of cold, sour milk, let it stand twelve hours, strain and apply two or three times a day.

ERIN-GO-BRACH.—When the hostess rises and gives the signal, the ladies leave the drawing-room. 2. It depends entirely upon her complexion. Silver-gray suits almost every one. 3. Nathalie is pronounced as if spelt "Nattalee." Psyche is pronounced "Syke." Beloved, "Belov'd." Specific is pronounced as spelt, the accent being on the second syllable, thus—"spe-cif'ic."

P. C. C.—Yes, in an extended signification, natural history is that science which investigates the peculiarities of all bodies that we can see, but the term is generally restricted to the external description of objects of nature, whether vegetable, animal, or mineral; it is consequently divided into three headings: first, geology and mineralogy; second, botany; and third, zoology.

"MISERABLE" wishes to know if he can get a divorce from a very bad wife. Your case is indeed a sad one, but the offence you allege having occurred ten years ago, and you having lived with your wife ever since, you have, we fear, condoned, and so legally pardoned her. For her intemperance you have no legal remedy; try kindness, persuasion, and, moreover, good example.

R. B. M.—1. A gentleman may keep his hat on when handing a lady to a carriage, even though your friend argues that etiquette does not allow of it. It is absolutely necessary for him to do so, unless he has been endowed with three hands—a freak of nature seldom if ever seen. 2. When a marriage engagement is broken off, all letters, portraits and gifts should be returned by each party. 3. Dark-brown hair.

F. F. A.—The expression, "I will die in the last ditch," is ascribed to William of Orange. According to the historian, Hume, when Buckingham urged the inevitable destruction which hung over the United Provinces, and asked William whether he did not see that the Commonwealth was ruined, the prince replied: "There is one certain means by which I can be sure never to see my country's ruin—I will die in the last ditch."

FRED.—Metallurgy is the art of extracting metals from their ores and adapting them to various processes of manufacture. The miner first extracts the ores from the earth, and, by mechanical processes of dressing, frees them from foreign matter more or less completely, so as to render them fit for treatment by the metallurgist. The best books on metallurgy are "Perry's Metallurgy," "Karsten's System," and "Le Play's Traité de Metallurgy."

E. S.—1. As "tumour" is simply the Latin word for any swelling, your common sense should teach you that tumours may proceed from an immense variety of causes, and that any one who professes to have a "sure cure" is either very ignorant or an impostor. For the more malignant cases there is no remedy, except the prompt and thorough application of the knife in the hands of a skilful surgeon. 2. You will need a little more than 6,789 feet of three-quarter-inch rope to completely cover your cone. 3. A car wheel, exactly three feet four inches in diameter at the point where it touches the rail, will turn a very little over 504 times in a mile.

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